George Lee
September 1780.

(Vom Thal Auth.

THE

# ERRORS

OF

# INNOCENCE,

IN

FIVE VOLUMES.

"For tho' I will not practise to deceive,
"Yet, to avoid deceit, I mean to learn,"

*Shakespeare.*

VOL. IV.



*LONDON:*

Printed for G. G. J. and J. ROBINSON, No. 25,
Pater-Noster-Row.——1786.

## ERRATA to VOLUME IV.

Page 6, line 12, for them, read all
P. 27, l. 10, for deilrum, r. delirium
P. 32, l. 6, for way, r. force
P. 89, l. 19, for Ignus, r. Ignis
P. 114, l, 11, for remains, r. remainder
P. 149, l. 13, for preremptory, r. peremptory.

# ERRORS of INNOCENCE.

## LETTER CV.

*To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*Mulberry-Mount, Jan.*

TO ſay I was aſtoniſh'd at the receipt of your two laſt, is a feeble expreſſion. Oh, my very ſoul glow'd by turns with oppoſite ſenſations, to ſee my ſex at once ſo ennobled, and debas'd. Weak, and ill-fated woman! how has ſhe fallen a victim to herſelf, and by a criminal indulgence, embitter'd thoſe various bleſſings, Heaven had ſo liberally beſtow'd! a cor-

rupted heart has infected its gifts, and the united poisons have strengthen'd each other. A victim to the vices of the world, before she has even run thro' half its career of follies, she will, I fear, early set it at defiance. She is not the sacrifice to Mr. Obrien; it is to dissipation, to the rage of distinction, she falls a prey. It is not to gratify the wishes even of a dishonorable lover, that she disgraces a noble and estimable husband; it is thro' the fear of passing an evening alone. Frivolous, even in vice! yet these are the women, whose names disgrace our Courts of Justice: names, sacred in the annals of the past, and sanctified by the most illustrious actions, now adorning some scandalous anecdote in a newspaper, increasing the sale of a despicable pamphlet, or stuck up, amidst the vilest of their sex, at the windows of a licentious print-shop. My heart bleeds for the noble one she has injur'd! Edward has had a fever of indignation ever

er ſince he read her letter. He cannot think, ſpeak, or hear of her with moderation. Lord Melroſs has urg'd us to come to town. Mr. Nugent, I am inclin'd to think, will accept the invitation, only to obſerve from her actions, how far ſhe dealt ſincerely with you. I expreſs'd my hopes that ſhe would do ſo: he ſhook his head with moſt emphatical diſguſt, and I ſee does not believe it poſſible, her error ſhould be conceal'd. Her Lord young, gay, amiable, mixing every where, ſought every where, is but too much expos'd to hear the moſt invidious truths, from thoſe amidſt our ſex, who envy or hate her; and doubt not, my dear, but there are hundreds who do both. He is not a duelliſt, I know; but he is at a period of life, when the tumults of the paſſions are rarely to be govern'd, even by the principles moſt cheriſh'd; and tho' I have heard him ſay, he would not fight but in his profeſſion, Edward ſhakes his head at

that too, and ſeems to know him better than he knows himſelf. At this time too her guilt is doubly ſhocking, ſince a few months more would, I doubt not, from the tenor of his character and conduct, have fixt him deciſively hers. His paſſion for you, ever uncertain, ſometimes ſubſiding in eſteem, ſometimes debas'd into deſire, has never yet attain'd that permanent ſtate, which alone can reſiſt the efforts of reaſon, principle, and ſituation; theſe all unite him to her, and once confirm'd by delicacy or attention in her conduct, would, I doubt not, in time, effectually alienate him from a foreign attachment. Love, my dear, both you and he have prov'd, to be a ſtrong, but not an unconquerable paſſion; in your boſom as it is more gentle, and more pure, it is conſequently more durable. The habits of your life too, are retirement and reflection; every day renders his more active.

tive. Your merit, however, like your ſtruggles, will have the ſuperiority; ſince your conqueſts over yourſelf, will be ſolely the effort of your virtues, whilſt a thouſand incidental circumſtances will unite to accompliſh his. But ſunk in fate, how have you riſen in merit, above the weak and guilty woman, whoſe vices have betray'd him. Led alike into error, alike the object of ſolicitation, alike lovely enough to become the object of cenſure, the triumphant influence of mind has elevated you, whilſt the failure of its exertions, has debas'd and humbled her.—You have riſen from every ſtruggle with freſh vigour for the next, only by daring to think you might; ſhe has ſunk from weakneſs to weakneſs, merely from not directing her underſtanding to the regulation of a firſt error. Perfection is not, it is true, the lot of humanity, yet ſhe who aims at it, at leaſt ennobles her failings, no longer ſinks the improbable in the im-

poſſible, and ſtriving to be all that ſhe ought, will inſenſibly become all that ſhe can.

"Since but to *wiſh* more virtue, is to gain."

As to coming again to town, it is a ſtep nothing but neceſſity can urge me to.—Yet where the happineſs, the honor of thoſe with whom I am ſo dearly connected, is concern'd, there is nothing I would not undertake! Oh, that vile Obrien, what has he not to anſwer for! and much I fear, he will anſwer for them. For you, ſo hardly tried, ſurely ſome happier days muſt be yet in ſtore; and even whilſt thus tried, the ſenſibilities of exalted minds ravage not the hearts they fill. They only meliorate its virtues, and elevate its hopes: whilſt the tumultuous ſtorm of the paſſions, irritates and hardens it; prepares it for vice, and doubly unfits it for the attendant remorſe.

My

My ſweet boy runs about the garden when the weather will permit, and is become the ſaucieſt rogue alive.—He loves his father, better than he does me; a ſad proof of his taſte, however.—And Edward is paſſionately fond of him. You will think ſo, when I tell you he is the moſt indulgent of the two. So much more, that the other day I very gravely fetch'd a morning cap, and put it on his head, by way of a hint.———Adieu, my dear friend, I will write ſoon.

H. NUGENT.

## LETTER CVI.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.*

*Winbrook, Feb.*

THE ruin is at length wound up to its highest pitch. Davenport has stopt payment, and a draft of Mr. Obrien's was amongst the first protested. "Want, worldly want," my dear friend, may probably be my portion: nor am I philosopher enough, I confess, to view it with indifference. But if to *me* a reverse of this nature, is terrible, how much more so must it be to Mr. Obrien; he, who lives but to the world; nor seeks any other deities, than its luxuries, and its ostentations. His temper has been in a state of irritation, that has excited my pity. The house in town, I mean immediately to give up, and the furniture, may

perhaps,

perhaps, on ſome future day, ſwell out a catalogue, for the amuſement of thoſe who have ſo often ſat at my table. Do not ſuppoſe I think poverty a certain evil, but in the extreme. Thouſands have owed both their virtues and enjoyments, to that chaſten'd knowledge of themſelves it produces; but the melancholy views it too often affords thoſe who have known affluence; the dreary retroſpection upon the vices, the frivolouſneſs, and the follies they have indulg'd, (now diſplayed in their true colours, by their perceiving them, to be the marking ones of thoſe characters they aſſociated with;) the ingratitude, and hardneſs of heart, ſuch retroſpections diſcover, but too much unfit the mind they fill, for a future intercourſe with the world. It is true, that the equipages of the profligate, and the ruin'd, ſtill fill our ſtreets; they return, madly to ſquander the little, chance, or a few years of œconomy, has retriev'd; but their re-

is the craving of an appetite, that loaths the nourifhment it feeks. They defpife, and are defpis'd; they have felt all the bitternefs of neglect, and its ftings remain in their hearts: they do not affociate, they live in a tumult in which they are glad to drown the remembrance of every feeling, and are mifanthropes in the bofom of fociety. Such will Mr. Obrien one day be; fuch, muft he be, if he continues the character he is: and my injuries will revenge themfelves. To me, perhaps, fome favourable circumftance may arife, from an event full of fo many that are the contrary; I may now with frefh vigor, folicit that total feparation, I have long and ardently wifhed.—For it is dreadful to be thus united in fate, with one who by turns excites my fears, my refentment, and my pity. Out of the wreck of my fortune, I may fecure a fmall pittance, which may enable me to fix near you. In your

houfe,

houſe, (dearly as I love you) I will never be a conſtant inmate. A thouſand reaſons of delicacy, prudence, and pride, forbid it, which I need not recapitulate. —All this however, muſt be deferr'd till Mr. Obrien has recover'd his temper, which I fear, will not be very ſoon.

And now I muſt confeſs my wiſhes, that you could, conſiſtently with your own domeſtic comfort, ſpend a few weeks in Groſvenor-Square. It is the dangerous period, when Lady Melroſs may be ſaved, or irretrievably loſt. I cannot be a guard upon her, for I have no home in town, and as Mr. Obrien will find her even more neceſſary to his extravagancies, he will leave no ſtep untried towards a ſecond ſeduction.—Unfortunate woman! for that he loves her not, even according to his own ideas, I much believe; ſince I have the greateſt cauſe to think, he

voluntarily indulg'd his vanity, by throwing her letter in my way; ſure, that whatever my ſentiments, regard for Lord Melroſs, would impoſe ſilence upon them; and not entirely aware, that by ſending it off to you, I put it out of their power to recover it.

*Farewell,*

S. O.

## LETTER CVII.

*To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*Mulberry-Mount, Feb.*

YOUR wiſhes, and your ſituation, my dear friend, have determin'd me; we ſhall be in town, almoſt as ſoon as this reaches you, and, till then, I defer ſaying any thing on that extenſive field Davenport's failure has open'd to both.—You a philoſopher! No my dear, my beloved Sophia, we need but look on thoſe eyes, which are moſt truly the viſible ſoul, to be aſſur'd yours is alive to the moſt poignant emotions; I ſhould not love you, if it was not, nor eſteem you if you did not know how to conquer them.—Lord Melroſs has again written, to preſs our viſit.—He mentions Davenport.—And

in a ſubſequent paragraph, adds, "your preſence is more than deſirable, it is *neceſſary* to me; and not only yours, but Lady Helen's: when we meet, I will explain my meaning." As he ſpeaks fully on the ſubject of Lady Melroſs in the concluſion of the letter, this cannot allude to her. To whom indeed, ſhould it, but to one who deſervedly engroſſes half his thoughts. Do not however, let your pride, or your delicacy take the alarm; I mention the circumſtance, only to aſſure you, that he takes a tender intereſt in every event of your life. He ſhall have no more than an intereſt, depend upon it; and I would not forgive him for having leſs. And ſo Lady Melroſs and my ſiſter-in-law are great friends!—I knew not till lately to whom the papers alluded by Lady S——. Half of Mr. Nugent's buſineſs in town, will be to ſettle the legacy we have acquir'd by our late misfortune; an acquiſition indeed with

which my brother is ſo much diſcontented, as well as with that left Lady Melroſs, that I know not what reception we ſhall meet with from him, but am determin'd to hope the beſt.

You have heard, I ſuppoſe, that Mr. Erſkine has appeal'd to the houſe of peers. —Surely he is mad. Lord Melroſs, will be again tormented with law; for tho' it has been inſinuated that a compromiſe might be effected, he rejected the idea as diſgraceful. Is not this romance? The more ſo, as, I know he would have ſerved Erſkine, at the time he believ'd the affair terminated.

I have a thouſand things to prepare for our departure, and muſt therefore bid you adieu.—I intend my boy ſhall be your gueſt the chief part of my time, and ſhall bring him myſelf, as ſoon after my arrival

arrival in London as possible, and if you can find room, and Mr. Obrien good-humour, shall intrude the company of

*Your ever affectionate,*

HELEN NUGENT.

LET-

## LETTER CVIII.

*To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*Grosvenor-Square, March.*

WE are once more in London, where I did not intend being for many years. I hope, however, when next I leave it, to carry with me that invaluable friend, who alone could have brought me here. By some mistake in Edward's last to Lord Melross, we arrived a day sooner than we were expected, and consequently found nobody at home. They had dined at Spenser-House, and as it was uncertain what their stay would be, we had no option, but to follow, or send for them; and on this important decision, seemed to depend the whole *étiquette* of our meeting with my brother and sister. By the formality of letting them know we were

in

in town, we ſhould demand a viſit, which they might not pay duly, or in the manner we wiſh'd. In ſurpriſing them, a confidence and familiarity would be ſhewn, which might prevent future coldneſs.—The laſt choice, was at leaſt the ſafeſt; and without debating the point with Mr. Nugent, (in whoſe learned head, not one of theſe important nothings had enter'd) I ſent a ſhort note, ſignifying that we ſhould have the pleaſure of embracing the whole party in half an hour. We expected Lord Melroſs would have return'd with the meſſenger, and might indeed have gueſs'd, from his not doing ſo, that he had deſerted; but without waiting for further invitation than a return of the compliments, we ſet off. How did the driving once more thro' thoſe gates awaken bitter remembrance!—Happy as I am, in my union with Mr. Nugent, I can never think without regret, that the effecting it was a blot in my life, ſince it caus'd a

pang

pang, to him from whom I receiv'd it.— On entering the drawing-room, we found Lord and Lady Somerſet, my mother, and Lady Melroſs. The ſight of ſo many familiar, and yet formal faces, with the deep mourning in which every one was clad, ſtruck upon my heart; and before I could return their compliments, I burſt into tears. Not one, however, ſeem'd to comprehend the latent cauſe of them, as they unanimouſly laid it upon the fatigue of my journey.

"The melancholy event that preceded our laſt parting," ſaid Mr. Nugent, breaking the ſilence which had followed firſt enquiries, "will I hope excuſe this little agitation; ſince every one preſent, muſt ſympathize in it." You would almoſt have ſmiled, my dear, tho' I wept, to ſee every head ſhake in uniſon at this ſpeech, and every eye, ceremonioufly caſt to the ground, as if to conceal a tear, which none however felt My brother's hand

remain'd

remain'd ſuſpended in the meditated tune on the table, which was wont to ſupply every pauſe in the converſation, and the remaining drops of coffee, were ſuffer'd to grow cold, as the hearts of thoſe who held them. Oh! how mine ſicken'd at the ſubſequent panegyric.

"We have had a great loſs indeed, Mr. Nugent," ſaid my mother, after a pauſe; "but Heaven's Will muſt be done. —An excellent huſband!"

"The moſt diſtinguiſh'd of my friends!" ſaid Janetta affectedly.

"A fine politician too, upon my ſoul!" cried Spenſer, eagerly, as if afraid ſomebody would ſtep in firſt, and leave him nothing to ſay; as he ſeem'd to have done by his lady; who made no further progreſs in her ſpeech, than that of opening her mouth. Mine died away in tears, and Edward made a juſt and noble eulogium, adding with a tender attention to me, "that it might be better to wave a

ſubject,

ſubject, he had been to blame in obtruding."

"Perhaps, Mr. Nugent wiſhes to diſcuſs a more important one," ſaid Spenſer, turning to my mother, with an air, half ſarcaſtic.

"More important, my Lord! pardon me for repeating your words," return'd Edward, "I know of none ſo."

"You have talk'd with Spotſwood," (our Lawyer, my dear) "I preſume, Sir," ſaid my brother.

"That was not poſſible my Lord! I have not been half an hour in London; and the calls of intereſt, are, with me, always ſubſervient to every other."

"A little cream, if you pleaſe, Madam!" ſaid Spenſer, with a moſt impertinent careleſſneſs. "James you may go!"

"For Heaven's ſake, what is the matter?" cried I, perceiving indignation in the countenances of both, and that thoſe

of

of the whole party indeed, did not ſeem too harmonious.

"The Will, the Will, my dear!" ſaid Edward, with a peeviſhneſs that ſpoke him much hurt.

"No more repartees pray," ſaid my wife ſiſter-in-law, playing her fan, "we ſhall have you quarrel, and frighten us to death."

"Don't be alarm'd, Madam," return'd Spenſer, I have no doubt but one friend is as peaceable as the other. Lord Melroſs has *prudence* enough for both." The ſneer with which this was ſpoken, and the look he caſt at Janetta, convinc'd me they had been ſparring on this affair of the legacies, before we came in. Her look anſwer'd his, you may be ſure.

"No more *repartées*," drawl'd ſhe, in a tone, and manner ſo preciſely like Lady Somerſet's, that no muſcles could withſtand it. My brother who was ſufficiently ſen-

ſible

ſible of the ridicule, redden'd with anger.

"The advantage of a *witty* wife!" retorted he. "Lord Melroſs may thank me for that!"

"As it was the firſt time your Lordſhip had any concern with the talent," replied Janetta, "you will certainly be pardon'd. *I* will anſwer for its being the laſt."

"Your ſpeech to me, my Lord," ſaid Edward, (who had by this time recover'd himſelf) "is as incomprehenſible as many former ones; and I am only ſatisfied in the certainty that no man breathing can be degraded, by being compar'd with Lord Melroſs."

"I think, Mr. Nugent, you might have had reſpect enough to let Lord Somerſet and Lady Melroſs ſpeak," interrupted my mother,

"Reſpect, Madam," added Mr. Nugent, in a tone that alarm'd my whole ſoul.

"Brother!

"Brother! Edward!" I exclaim'd incoherently—"Are you mad? Have you ſo ſoon forgotten your melancholy reconciliation?"

"Oh there are remedies for theſe ſhort memories!" return'd my unfeeling brother, with another ſneer.—"*We* have found them admirable;" and again he look'd at Janetta.

"By experience, my Lord?" aſked ſhe with a moſt provoking ſmile.

"Aſk Lord Melroſs! he will tell you, you are indebted to ſuch for a huſband."

"Yes, and may be ſo, for getting rid of him;" ſaid the young Counteſs, in a tone, which ſhew'd ſhe had not forgiven the jeſt upon herſelf.

"If I am, Madam, *I* ſhall not make ſure of another within a month."——

"Lord Somerſet," ſaid Edward, ſick of this fine-lady wit, "I am not to be inſulted, nor is the name of Lord Melroſs, to be the ſubject of inſipid diſquiſitions.

In

In his abſence to reflect upon him thus obliquely, is "——

"The only ſpecies of meanneſs his Lordſhip would not be guilty of, perhaps, in his preſence," added Janetta.

"None but the devil, or a woman," ſaid Spenſer, "would dare to have ſaid that;"—

"The wife of Lord Melroſs"——

"The wiſe of Lord Melroſs," interrupted he, in a tranſport of paſſion.—"Say rather, the beggarly offspring of a beggarly Enſign.—Brought up thro' charity, and married thro' compaſſion: and now," he added, taking her hand, and ſurveying her with the bitterest contempt, "becauſe a weak huſband ornaments the pretty bauble with diamonds and embroidery, her little head is turn'd with the metamorphoſis, and ſhe preſumes to talk to her benefactors, of conſequence, and titles.—Go child! go, and recollect a little, of that humility, with which you urg'd

me to interfere with this formidable husband, to oblige him to accept your fair hand." And away he flung it. Lady Melrofs feem'd petrified; till a faint *te-he*, from my wife fifter, recover'd her.

"And do you dare to infult me too! poor Plaifter of Paris, compofition of powder, and paint!—Wafh off the enamel, left you crack it with a fmile; and let us for once fee the outfide, as unadorn'd as the in." Tears of paffion gufh'd out, as fhe fpoke, and the deepeft flufh disfigur'd her complexion.

"Why you are all mad, I think, tonight," faid my mother.—"Spenfer, what do you mean by this behaviour?"

"Have I faid a word, that is not truth, Madam?"

"Why Janetta, what is the matter with you?"

"Don't talk to me! don't talk to me!" replied fhe. Then paffionately ftarting up, "The matter, Madam! does the creation

ation produce another man like that before you? A man, do I ſay? No! If pride, meanneſs, avarice, and inſolence, can make one, let me call him a Devil!" Good God! my dear, what a fiend is paſſion! hers was little ſhort of phrenzy: her looks, her voice, her air, were hardly human. Unconſcious of what ſhe ſaid, or did, there was ſcarce an exceſs, to which this deilrium did not ſeem capable of carrying her. I ſhall never, I think, be tranſported ſo far as to paſſion again, whilſt I live; for who ſhall ſay where it may ſtop, when neither prudence, delicacy, or rank, could ſet bounds to hers? Mr. Nugent, and I, abſolutely ſtared at each other.

"Your Ladyſhip," ſaid he at length, turning to my mother, has tacitly aſſented to one circumſtance I cannot paſs over." "Lord Melroſs, (addreſſing himſelf to my brother) is, I dare believe, ſuperi-

or to compulſion of every kind, particularly that alluded to."

"You are deceiv'd, Sir," return'd Spenſer, with a mighty ſelf-ſatisfied air, "your friend *dar'd* not do otherwiſe than marry."

"And on what do you build that aſſertion, my Lord?"

"You are not likely to be acquainted with the circumſtance, Mr. Nugent. We had a ride together in Hyde-Park. Our conference was a ſhort one. I was not in a pacific humour, or his Lordſhip in a fighting one; ſo it ended, as moſt of theſe affairs do, in a marriage."

"You aſtoniſh me!" replied Edward, after a pauſe, and his countenance did juſtice to his words.—"And could you ſuppoſe that abſurd affair, intimidated Lord Melroſs! believe me, it never excited any thing but a ſmile"—

"Moſt heroic Knight-errant!" ſaid Janetta, "how is it poſſible to expreſs my gratitude for ſuch extraordinary proweſs!

and

and ſo much ſuperior to exaggeration too! ages to come will celebrate your victories, as the conquer'd did by laughter." She laugh'd with an hyſterical ſob at the end, that excited at once my fears and my pity.

"You will find ſufficient employment for his Lordſhip's courage, if he has any," ſaid the young Counteſs.

"You!" return'd Janetta, ſtill alive to her rank, "do you remember to whom you ſpeak, Madam? But it has ever been a queſtion with me, whether your ignorance, or your ill-breeding, were the moſt to be blam'd, and you are determin'd it ſhall never be decided."

"For your own ſakes Ladies," ſaid Edward, "drop this converſation; nor make another bluſh for you."

"Sure you have both titles enough," ſaid the Lady Dowager, "without quarrelling about them."

"Let each, before ſhe condemns the other, examine her own heart," ſaid I; unſealing my lips, moſt unfortunately, tho' the firſt time for an hour paſt.

"*I* ſhall not find Obrien there, if I do," anſwer'd the young Lady Somerſet, pertly.

"And who will?" return'd Lady Melroſs, fixing her eyes ſternly upon the former. Edward's face was in a flame. I never ſaw him ſo much agitated with ſuppreſt indignation. My cheeks glow'd.

"Obrien," repeated my brother, with a malicious pleaſure; "Obrien! I congratulate your Ladyſhip on your taſte; you are not the only woman, by five-hundred, to whom that gentleman is devoted."

"One of which, has the honor of bearing your title, I believe, my Lord."

"Obrien, my devoted!" ſaid the ſilly Lady Somerſet, with an eagerneſs that ſhew'd ſhe was telling a falſehood, "don't

believe

believe her, my Lord, he never told me ſo in his life; but I can prove "——

"Think well of what you are going to ſay," interrupted Janetta.—"If but a word injurious to my reputation, tremble for the conſequences! I will have a maſculine revenge;"——

"Fye, fye! Lady Melroſs!" ſaid I, we have had too much of the maſculine already."

"Good Heavens!" return'd ſhe, awakening as from a dream, "how have they expos'd me! or rather, how have I expos'd myſelf!—I feel you deſpiſe me! but to be thus arraign'd, inſulted, ſcorn'd."—And her voice ſunk into hyſterical ſobs, till my mother was alarm'd.

"La! what did we quarrel about?" ſaid Lady Somerſet, turning to me, when her late friend was a little recover'd.—When decency, peace, and temper are deſtroy'd, ſigh'd I, how many aſk that queſtion? Yet even in the little inſtance

of ſoliciting a reconciliation, did this ſilly woman demonſtrate the ſuperiority of an unreproaching conſcience; ſince Janetta, with an underſtanding ſo far ſuperior, was not able to forgive, merely becauſe conſcious guilt had given way to inſult.—And thus ends the everlaſting friendſhip of the two ladies. Lady Melroſs, (tho' dreſt for a round of viſits) went home abruptly, leſt her Lord ſhould return to know the reaſon ſhe did not appear at them; and eſcap'd him but by a quarter of an hour. But what a gewgaw, a glittering deception does ſhe appear! I thought, I ſhould not pity her, but I was deceiv'd. Who that ſees her in public, blazing in diamonds, and ſurrounded by flatterers, can ſuſpect, that far from being happy, her heart is a prey to diſtruſt, and remorſe. That it is in the power of a fool, like the young Lady Somerſet, to ſtretch her upon the rack of terror, and of my brother, to wound her pride even to agony;

ny; that ſhe is in ſhort, a meteor abroad, and a deſpis'd, inſulted, miſerable victim at home; to whom, the preſent affords nothing but pain, and the future nothing but deſpair. Since ſecrets like hers, it is ſufficiently obvious, can never remain long ſuch, and ſhe feels herſelf hourly approaching a precipice, ſhe can only foreſee without being able to prevent. Yet had ſhe been innocent, ſhe had really been the gay and happy creature ſhe appears.

Her paſſion had however, one favorable conſequence, in ſilencing Edward, and my brother. I had a long converſation with the former about the inſinuations thrown on the courage of Lord Melroſs; he laugh'd at the idea, and only ſaid, "he hoped Lord Somerſet would have prudence enough not to ſpread the fame of his valor too far, leſt it ſhould receive a check, not of the pleaſanteſt nature. One further obſervation ſtruck him,

which, I fear, is but too true.—My mother, certainly knows the ſhocking ſecret we are at ſo much pains to conceal.—Nay, I fear, it is ſtill further ſpread.—What was it Lady Somerſet "could prove?"—Till we meet, however, I ſhall quit the ſubject. May I come on Tueſday? I have much to ſay to you, and aſſure yourſelf, if Mr. Obrien is tolerably civil to me, I will exert myſelf towards him. You muſt be ſeparated, and the preſent criſis, is, I hope, a favourable one.

Mr. Nugent and Lord Melroſs, join in every kind and reſpectful remembrance, with,

*Your affectionate,*

HELEN NUGENT.

LET-

## LETTER CIX.

*To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*March.*

I Write a few lines to apologize for not attending you till Wednesday. All is peace once more. Lord Melrofs has awed, or won every party to filence. He is the idol of the young Countefs, in fpite of my brother, who with a fine eftate, is nearly as poor, as when he was fimply Lord Spenfer; and hates every body mention'd in the Will. We meet on Tuefday at Spenfer-Houfe, where Lord Melrofs will be the only one who will not act the hypocrite. Edward and I are juft come from thence! we have return'd a morning vifit, and carried little Herbert with us.—May my fmiling boy be the pledge of peace in his family. He ran to his father

on entering the room, and clung round his neck; nor would he be perſuaded to ſhew his face for ſome time, after which raiſing it gently, he look'd round for a moment over Edward's ſhoulder, till he fixt on Spenſer, and ſmiling at him, buried his head again in his father's boſom. My brother was much pleas'd with this token of diſtinction, which was owing I believe to his reſemblance to me. He pull'd out the rings of his hair, whilſt the ſaucy rogue ſeconded him by rubbing them over his face, and then laugh'd, till the poliſh'd roſy cheek ſhone again. I am very vain, all the gentlemen are fond of my boy, and that we know is no ſmall compliment.

I had a converſation with Lord Melroſs about you. His heart is deeply in this affair of Davenport. He aſk'd me a million of queſtions, which I anſwer'd as

I pleas'd.——Oh, what might not Janetta have made of him; if his heart avows another attachment, it is her own fault; for he has ſtruggled hard to ſubdue it, and not without the ſame degree of ſucceſs with yourſelf. That is to ſay, a ſucceſs which it depends on circumſtances to fix. —Till Wedneſday adieu.

H. NUGENT.

## LETTER CX.

*To Lady Helen Nugent, Winbrook—From Mr. Nugent.*

*Grosvenor-Square, April.*

*Written in the Envelope.*

SHOULD this reach you in the presence of Mrs. Obrien, find some pretence for withdrawing, before you read the enclos'd.

* * * * * * * * *

THE lines written in the cover, will but too much prepare you for every thing that is to follow. Lord Melross is no longer a stranger to that detestable secret we have endeavor'd to conceal.—An accident at once simple, and singular, has

has put into his hands the moſt indubitable proofs of her falſehood. He has felt every thing ſhort of phrenzy, and his indignation only ſuffers a ſhort ſuppreſſion, from his ignorance of the villain who has wrong'd him.—That ſecret is ſtill ours, and I have endeavour'd to make it impenetrable. Go inſtantly to Stanton-Audley, and enjoin an abſolute ſilence on the Lady Dowager Somerſet; it is not likely Lord Melroſs ſhould apply to the young Counteſs, and from thoſe only have we any thing to fear. I am to follow him this inſtant to Mount-Herbert, whence I will write to you fully.——Adieu, be cautious, for his life is at ſtake.

EDWARD NUGENT.

LET-

## LETTER CXI.

*To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*Stanton-Audley.*

I Am half dead with terror and doubt. After escaping from Mrs. Obrien, without exciting even a suspicion, I unfortunately arriv'd here two hours after my mother was gone to town. I dispatch'd Peter with a note instantly, but in vain; she was not to be found, and I, fear, is by this time with you.

By what strange means can this have been discover'd! or how is it possible O-brien's name should be long conceal'd! Will not Lord Melrose extort it from *her* at least, should we silence every other informer! perhaps even at this moment—

Good

Good Heavens! I am all anguiſh and dread. Write inſtantly, and tell me whether I ought to come to you or remain here.

*Yours ever,*

HELEN NUGENT.

LET-

## LETTER CXII.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mr. Nugent.*

*Mount-Herbert, April.*

THE few hafty lines I difpatch'd to you from Grofvenor-Square, have, I hope, reach'd you, without alarming Mrs. Obrien. I feel for your impatience, and tho' I yet tremble for the confequences of this unfortunate fcene of guilt, can no longer delay giving you the particulars of the difcovery.

On the morning of the day I wrote to you, Lord Melrofs and I, had been riding, till the weather fuddenly becoming ftormy, we return'd a full hour fooner than ufual. The carriage ftood at the door with Lady Melrofs, with whom we had a moment's converfation at the window. —He afk'd her in the courfe of it, where

fhe

ſhe was going. To this, ſhe return'd, ſome evaſive anſwer, which with the perturbation of her whole air, gave me the ſtrongeſt ſuſpicion of an aſſignation. Without noticing it, he requeſted his pocket-book, having given it her before he went out, on account of its containing ſome notes and papers of value. The involuntary ſteadineſs of my eye, ſuffus'd her cheek with a glow that confirmed all my fears; and delaying to follow him in, I drew nearer the carriage, and repeated in a low, but diſtinct voice, the word "remember," ſhe look'd at me without anſwering, but turn'd pale, and, with a guilty heſitation, ſaid, "ſhe would not go out to-day." The ſervant inſtantly open'd the door, and I led her into the great parlor; but for the remainder of the ſcene, all deſcription muſt fail.—The chance examination of a moment, had diſcover'd to Lord Melroſs ſhe had given him

him a wrong pocket-book, and the firſt papers that ſtruck him were thoſe I encloſe. The hand fortunately was diſguis'd. —Obrien writes a fine one, and theſe are ſcrawls, he muſt have deſign'd ſhould never riſe up in judgment againſt him.—But the art, the guilt, the infamy, were all indubitable. The florid complexion of Lord Melroſs, was chang'd to ſo deadly a paleneſs, as render'd me ſpeechleſs; but the inarticulate ſentence utter'd by his Lady, brought back his whole ſoul in one glow to his cheek, and gave words to that powerful emotion, which has made him another being from the preceding hour. He had yet command enough of himſelf, to bid her leave the room; but ſtarting up a moment after, exclaim'd, "ſhe would eſcape," and ruſh'd into the hall.—He was right; for ſhe was already in the carriage.—And the footmen, with faces of buſy curioſity, all in waiting.—"Drive to Mount-Herbert," ſaid he, caſting his eyes

eyes round, and endeavouring to collect himſelf; but with a tone and air that petrified his hearers.—"Nugent, you will follow me!" the coachman inſtantly obey'd orders ſo unuſually authoritative, and, without waiting for his own horſes, Lord Melroſs gallop'd after, on one of the ſervants. I ſtay'd but to collect the papers his emotion had made him forget, and ſcribbling a few lines to you, purſued, and overtook him, as he voluntarily kept the carriage in ſight. My ſociety was a welcome relief; for his ſoul was oppreſt with its own tumults.

"The name! the name," of her ſeducer, was the grand object to which every paſſion turn'd. He regretted the leaving the letters, of which he had read but one, and confeſs'd he did not know the hand; but was ſomewhat ſurpris'd on my pretending, that in my eagerneſs to follow him, I had left them lock'd up in Groſvenor-Square.

venor-Square. The idea of obliging her to avow the ſecret, however, conſoled him for the overſight; nor did I attempt then to argue againſt that vindictive ſpirit, which I ſaw defied all controul.

"For her," ſaid he, as we drew near Mount-Herbert, I have form'd my determination; "to ſee her, in the preſent ſituation of my mind, would be but too dangerous an experiment. A circumſtance on which reflection is little leſs than madneſs, effectually forbids it. And what is a divorce?—A reward for licentiouſneſs, that only confirms my infamy, and leaves her free to encreaſe her own. —Of that, however, we will talk further. For the preſent, a bitterer mortification attends her. Let the vanity and folly that have undone her, become her curſe!—From this moment, ſhe bids adieu to every indulgence of either. No jewels, no ſattins! no gaudy ornaments, under which the

the deformity of vice is conceal'd! I will make her a Magdalen in form, if not in heart; ſince I will withdraw nothing neceſſary to virtue, and leave nothing deſirable to vice."

I now, by his deſire, rode on, and ſaw her alight. She look'd pale. I aſk'd her how ſhe did—ſhe ſaid "dying;" and deſir'd ſhe might inſtantly be carried to her apartment. Of death, however, I ſaw no ſigns, tho' I did not contradict the accounts ſhe ſent Lord Melroſs, and, as her ſituation gave colour to the illneſs, I readily ſuffer'd them to deceive him. His agitation, by degrees ſubſided, into a calm determination of revenging himſelf the moment it was poſſible to bring her to a confeſſion. He wrote her a ſhort note to urge it, which ſhe thought proper to anſwer by another aſſurance ſhe was dying, and every thing now remains ſuſpended till ſhe chuſes to retract from that aſſertion.

aſſertion. To-morrow muſt be productive of ſome event; but as every hour will contribute towards rendering him more cool, the favourable chances are at leaſt ſtronger from the delay. He ſpoke once of Obrien, but ſhe mov'd in too extended a ſphere, to enable even a huſband (eſpecially after ſo long an abſence) to gueſs at her connexions.

* * * * * * * * *

Yours is this moment brought me.—What can have engaged Lady Somerſet? Do not, however, come. Stanton-Audley is, I think, your only proper retreat.—For ſhould Lord Melroſs once diſcover the villain, a duel will be the inevitable conſequence, and that inſtantly. Your relationſhip to one, and your reſidence under the roof of the other, would be incongruities, the world would juſtly cenſure, both in you and Mrs. Obrien. Do not

not think of Mount-Herbert. Scenes of this nature, are ill-calculated for you; be careful of the letters enclos'd.—I ſend them by a faithful hand. Lord Melroſs has yet ſeen only the ſecond.

*Your affectionate,*

EDWARD NUGENT.

* * * * * * * * *

*Letters enclos'd in the above.*

LETTER I.

*To Miſs Sutherland.*

NEVER was the Heſperian tree half ſo valuable, or ſo faithfully guarded, as the moſt adorable of her ſex, by that old hag, Lady S——. I have ſought in vain,

for an opportunity to repeat my aſſurances of tenderneſs and gratitude. Let her Ladyſhip, however, beware! Watchfulneſs itſelf was there an inſufficient protection againſt art, and ſhall love be leſs ingenious? How I pity a world yet ignorant of its misfortune!—That precious fruit was capable of ſowing diſcord even amongſt immortals, what then ought not to be the fears of an earthly generation from this.

Think how I languiſh under ſo tedious a conſtraint; it is now near a fortnight ſince you went to Spenſer-Houſe, and I have haunted it in vain. Surrounded by a troubleſome world, thoſe charms which would make a Paradiſe of the meaneſt retreat, were love preſided, are become my misfortune. Be leſs lovely, if you would have me live! I cannot bear to have a univerſe of rivals!—Grant me one line, to tell me when I may have a

chan ce

chance of pouring out at your feet, that inexhauſtible adoration, which no time can leſſen, and nothing but death extinguiſh.

LETTER II.

*To the Right Hon. Lady Melroſs.*

THOU dear capricious trifler, how often am I to complain of my diſappointments! twice within a month, and no huſband within three hundred miles to intervene!—You are an abſolute heretic in love, and I could almoſt find in my heart to condemn you to periſh in its flames, but that your pile would be more famous than thoſe of the Indians, by the ſelf-devoted victims who would attend it. —I allow you to be offended by the reports that have circulated; it is an indiſputable grant in all ages, that our ſex is to be inconſtant, and yours to complain.—Tho' if I did not fear your reſentment,

I ſhould add, that the latter privilege is often the only real diſtinction between us.

It is true, I was confoundedly in the diſmals the other night. I muſt have been ſo, when you could not revive me. However, thanks be to matrimony, Lady S— no longer is the ſame ſpy to Lady M—, ſhe was to Miſs Sutherland.—And your affiſtance has once more ſettled my derangements. Think that I wait with impatience for a meeting, and am in the interim

*Ever yours*

LETTER III.

*To Lady Melroſs.*

HOW often am I to tell you, that your doubts are abſurd and your ſcruples wearyſome!—Can I play my cards alone, think you, Madam? or ſtruggle to preſerve

ſerve your reputation, whilſt you do not reſerve a ſhilling from your own extravagancies to indulge mine?—"After the diſcovery of the morning," you ſay, "you have nothing left to hope, but an elopement or a divorce."—theſe you call *hopes*—I think, I could have found a juſter term for them.—But art thou really ſo pretty an idiot in the ways of this wicked world, as to ſuppoſe Lady Somerſet, inexorable!—What, rouge, wear brown powder, and lylac ribbons at fifty, yet want a fellow feeling for the little errors inſpir'd by *la belle paſſion*.—Who are to be its dupes, but the weak, the vain and the diſſipated: and what ſo juſtly marks the frivolous inſide, as the frivolous out. We may be deceiv'd in our judgment on theſe ſymbols, but the chances are ten to one in our favour, as I proved, when I this morning made the hall of Spenſer-Houſe, reſound with my formidable rap.—The obſequious door turn'd on its hinges, the

more obſequious footman on his heel, and diſplay'd inſtantaneouſly, the auguſt perſonage of his Lady! her portly figure, more portly than before, every frill erect, and the very ſack, as conſcious of its dignity, ſtiffening as ſhe ſpoke.—Our conference was, for ſeveral moments, not of the moſt ceremonious, or gentle nature—well ſaid the poet,

"The honour of a prude, is rage and ſtorm,
"'Tis uglineſs, in its moſt frightful form:
"Fiercely it ſtands, defying Gods—but not *men*."

There, he was a poet indeed; and wander'd into the regions of fiction.—In my ſofteſt, ſweeteſt tone, did I reply to the rais'd voice, and keen reproaches of the angry Dowager;—my eye ſeduloufly purſued hers;—my hand ſought that fair one, which, of the two, ſeem'd more inclined to ſalute my ear.—In ſhort, I ſooth'd, flatter'd, won over her vanity, and

and with that grand ally, found no difficulty in ſubduing her reaſon. She loved the world too well, to diſavow its right to ſanctify the errors it caus'd, and became at length a tacit convert, to the opinion, that there was no crime, but in being diſcover'd. Thus then, your fears of her betraying us, for awhile at leaſt, are ſilenc'd.—I will not ſwear, that they are ſo forever.—Chance, is the goddeſs that directs half the events of this life, and the chief advantage attending the ſober fools of it, is, that they regulate their own deſtiny, whilſt we are content to be the ſlaves of the moment.

As to your fears with regard to his return, of what conſequence is it to me, but for your ſake? *I* fear him not: do you therefore look to the reſt. The letters I cannot reſtore, unleſs for value received. That which coſt you ſo much mortification, it is impoſſible to obtain;

but for their own ſakes, and his amiable Lordſhip's they will be as glad to conceal it, as you can: for they know, I dare fight, and a brace of piſtols is the worſt of the buſineſs.

As to your not being able to raiſe the money, it is a jeſt: effect that, and the letters are yours. I cannot do without it; eſpecially after this laſt craſh. We read of a king, indeed, who had power to turn every thing into gold; but modern cuſtoms juſt reverſe the matter, and turn gold into every thing. Name your time for our meeting, I will come if I can, but don't care to promiſe any thing.

## LETTER IV.

*To Lady Melroſs.*

YOU trifle with me in inſtances where both my honor and my life are concerned.

ed. The jewels you ſent me, you knew, were not equivalent to half my demand. As to my wife, I have told you, ſhe has none left.—Yet I muſt have money, or I am undone; and you are ſenſible, I am not of a humour to be to alone. My honor was engag'd for the ſum loſt on Sunday.—And I know the fellow to be deſperate. I can do nothing in the way we mentioned, unleſs I intend to ſecure myſelf a halter. And N——, (a dirty old codger) diſappointed in his ſchemes upon my over-virtuous wife, treats me with formal bows from a ſplendid equipage.

I will have no more ſhuffles Madam! —The world is valued by the wife only as it is ſubſervient to them. I can menace when I ceaſe to perſuade; but remember, I act; the moment I ceaſe to menace.

## LETTER CXIII.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.*

*Winbrook.*

ALL, I find, is diſcover'd at Mount-Herbert. Haſten my dear friend, to inform me of the particulars, but do not come to me at preſent; as that brute, O-brien, may be here. I have been very miſerable ever ſince I receiv'd the intelligence, and beg you will inform me minutely of all that paſſes. How does my ſweet little Herbert? Pray remember me to him. Excuſe this haſty ſcrawl, as I have been very ill with this diſcovery.

*I am, my dear Lady Helen,*

*Your ever Affectionate,*

S. OBRIEN.

## LETTER CXIV.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mr. Nugent.*

*Mount-Herbert, April.*

TO-DAY has been, as I prognosticated, a scene of tumult, anxiety, and doubt. The physician declar'd Lady Melrofs in no danger; and it was signified to her, that she must either see me, or her Lord. She desir'd Lady Somerset might be sent for: she would admit, she said, nobody else. This produc'd so determin'd a note from Lord Melrofs, that she consented to rise, and call'd for her cloaths; but her astonishment on seeing those allotted her, was only to be equall'd by her resentment: she gave way to the most extravagant fits of it. Threaten'd the women who attended her, with the bitterest punishments, and vow'd she would

expire with weakneſs in bed, rather than wear ſuch a hideous diſguiſe. This wiſe reſolution ſhe held for ſome hours, till her fears overcoming her pride, ſhe aſſum'd a different character.—Grew quite diverted at the jeſt; and arraying herſelf, with much mock humility, call'd for a looking-glaſs. Here, however, all her effrontery fail'd; the ſight was not to be endur'd; the mirror dropt, the lady fainted, and the *comedy* was at an end.

My introduction, however, was not ſo immediate as the impatience of Lord Melroſs induc'd him to wiſh.—For before it could take place, a carriage drove up to the door;

"It is Lady Somerſet," ſaid his Lordſhip, looking thro' the ſaſh, "let me requeſt you will meet her; ſhe comes to ſatisfy herſelf, on a ſubject which has, no doubt, circulated half over London.—My ſoul is yet too indignant to ſpeak upon

on it, with one, who, if ſhe is not an accomplice, can be but little better, ſince ſhe was Janetta's only guard, and conſtant companion. If you can draw from her any inſight as to the name of the villain who has wrong'd me, I depend upon your friendſhip; if not, ſhe cannot be gone too ſoon.—For a weak head, and a haughty heart, are what I can rarely contend with, in my calmeſt moments." He had ſcarce retir'd thro' one door, when her Ladyſhip caught a glance of him, as ſhe ſwept in at the other.

"Your ſervant, Mr. Nugent," with a moſt conſequential courteſy.—"Where is Lord Melroſs gone, pray?"

"At preſent, Madam, he is engaged."

"And what engagements ſhould prevent his ſeeing me, Sir?"

"That muſt be explain'd to your Ladyſhip hereafter!—Allow me the honour of leading you into the drawing-room."

"I

"I ſhall take a diſh of chocolate with my niece, Sir, till your conſequential friend chuſes to ſee me."

"Your Ladyſhip will command what refreſhments you think proper, but the company of Lady Melroſs, you muſt, for the preſent, I fear, diſpenſe with."

"And why ſo, Sir?"

"Have no reports reach'd you, Madam, that may ſpare me the explanation?"

"As to reports, Sir, I know nothing that ſhould prevent Lady Melroſs from attending *me*."

"Then, Madam, I muſt, unwillingly, tell you, that his Lordſhip thinks one apartment, at preſent, a ſufficient indulgence for her."

"Why ſurely ſhe is not confined?" I aſſented. "A fine thing indeed! a woman of rank, and fortune, confined in her own houſe! what will this world come to!" and ſhe paus'd at this wiſe ejaculation. "On ſuppoſitions too! on mere [illegible] s!"

doubts!" (and are you then ſo well inform'd, Lady Somerſet? thought I!)—"However, I am gone, Sir! ſo tell your friend, I am not come, to be his priſoner alſo. You may add, however, that his next viſitor," and ſhe rais'd her voice maliciouſly, "will be ſeen as well as heard;" and off ſhe floated, with all the dignity of Scotland in her features. I went to Lord Melroſs, and requeſted he would permit her to be preſent at the converſation with his Lady, to which he aſſented.

I found the Dowager in the parlour, fanning herſelf moſt outrageouſly, tho' there was a ſtorm both of hail and ſnow, to which laſt, her complexion bore no reſemblance.

"Well Sir! quite the *maggiordomo*, I ſee! a fine houſe! noble gardens!—Pray how long have you come into poſſeſſion?"

"Your

"Your Ladyſhip is pleaſant! (and faith I never wrong'd my conſcience more) "I have once more intruded upon you, in order to clear up an error, which may materially affect your opinion of Lady Melroſs. The behaviour of his Lordſhip, is not built upon ſuppoſitions, he has proofs"——

"What are the proofs, Sir? Mr. Obrien"——ſhe ſtopt with conſcious guilt.

"If you wiſh to prevent the moſt fatal extremities, Madam, ſuffer not that name to paſs your lips."

"What are his proofs, Sir?"

"They are letters."

"Am I mention'd in them, Mr. Nugent?" I aſſented; ſhe was viſibly flutter'd.

"Imprudent fooliſh fellow! to dare to expoſe my name!"

"Give me leave to obſerve, Madam, that the imprudence was not all on his ſide."

"It's

"It's very true," replied ſhe, biting the top of her fan. But not in the leaſt applying my reflections to herſelf, but ſolely to her niece. "If his Lordſhip has proofs—that is—proofs—proofs, that will prove, I cannot but own he has ſome cauſe of complaint."

"Some cauſe," replied I, warmly.—"Great cauſe, Madam. Unfortunately, the greateſt, man can have, to induce him to expoſe a woman that has diſgrac'd him."

"Sir! Sir!" and ſhe walk'd about fanning herſelf, "ſhe is my niece!"

"I am ſorry for it, Madam!"

"And you are my ſon-in-law!" I was ſilent.

"But cannot I ſee either, Sir? This is a ſtrange mode of behaviour;——

"I will deal frankly with you, Madam.—You *may* ſee both, if on further reflection. you continue to wiſh it. Lord Melroſs does not yet know the name of the villain

villain who has wrong'd him. Whether, when interrogated, your Ladyſhip can plead equal ignorance, I leave to your own boſom to determine." She was dumb. —" From Lady Melroſs, he has enjoin'd me to extort the ſecret, which I already know but too well. In half an hour I am to ſee her, and you have only to deſire to accompany me, to aſſure yourſelf of my obedience."

" Well, Mr. Nugent, ſince it is ſo—why I think, we muſt compound matters as well as we can. I was guilty of a blunder, to be ſure, in entering into this ſilly buſineſs; but where the honor of a family is concern'd, one is tempted to go further to ſave it, than is ſtrictly right." This is her Ladyſhip's way of ſaving honor, my dear. " But tell me, candidly, whether you think Lord Melroſs, might not be prevail'd upon to overlook "——

" Never, Madam;" return'd I more warmly ſtill. " He is ignorant of thoſe contemptible

contemptible weakneſſes, inſtituted by depravity, and authoriz'd by cuſtom, which convert adultery into gallantry, and degrade our ſpecies, by confounding all diſtinctions of virtue, and vice; and leaves it to thoſe frivolous beings, who have no other means of attaching, to borrow the ſhameful one of convenience." I then laid before her, his determinations with regard to Janetta, and the immediate danger that would attend his diſcovering Obrien.

She was alarm'd at the idea of being expos'd as a party in the affair, and repeatedly requeſted to know, if I thought his Lordſhip "*really* in earneſt." To this I anſwer'd in the affirmative, and gave her an account of that violence of temper, and indiſpoſition, which whether feign'd, or otherwiſe, on the part of Lady Melroſs, had induc'd him to defer the meeting. Like moſt angry people, ſhe grew cowardly,

cowardly, in proportion as ſhe cool'd; and deſired I would ſee her niece firſt. I comply'd, and ſent up my compliments; but this produc'd a curious debate. Can you believe, that the weak woman, in the midſt of guilt and ſhame, was chiefly ſhock'd on account of her dreſs. At firſt ſhe abſolutely proteſted, ſhe would not ſee me at all. Then it muſt be in the dark; then in bed—then, in ſhort, the ſtrangeſt vagaries in the world, poſſeſt her; and nothing but the certainty of my being admitted by ſurpriſe, in caſe of a refuſal, could have extorted her conſent. At length, I was allow'd to enter. The window-ſhutters were half clos'd, and the curtains ſo low, that it was a mere twilight. She ſat by the fire, leaning on her hand. I bow'd on my entrance, but the lady kept her ſeat, with the dignity o heroine of romance.

"Good day, Mr. Nugent!" with a ſlight inclination of the head. "This vi-

ſit

ſit is quite ill-tim'd, and perhaps not altogether deſirable; but I ſhall be glad to underſtand, whether you come as a friend or an enemy."

"Lord Melroſs, Madam, has requeſted me"——

"I won't have him nam'd to me, Sir," interrupted ſhe, paſſionately ſtarting up, but caſting her eyes on her dreſs, ſhe inſtantly ſat down again. "I abhor his very idea!—Was ever woman us'd as I have been! to confine me! to take away my cloaths! and not content, even with that, oblige me to wear theſe deſpicable enſigns of indigence, and diſgrace!—You, Sir, I ſuppoſe, are obſequiouſly come to lecture his victim, but I will rather die, than be thus expos'd."

"Die! Madam!" repeated I, ſtruck with inexpreſſible diſguſt. "What, becauſe you wear a commoner gown, or a coarſer cap! I am ſorry for you, indeed, ſince perverted

perverted ſhame, is the moſt dangerous of all errors. When I enter'd, it was with an idea of delicacy, and reſpect, your reception, give me leave to add, has but ill juſtified. If you think you can collect yourſelf, I have ſomewhat to offer on the part of Lord Melroſs, which may deſerve your attention; if otherwiſe, our converſation may as well end here, for I have not authority to anſwer theſe phrenzical ſtarts of paſſion."

"And who, Sir, ſituated as I am, can avoid being frantic?"

"Do not confound the effect with the cauſe, Madam. Had you earlier curb'd this unfortunate impetuoſity, you had never experienc'd a trial, ſo ſevere as the preſent. And, (tho' the obſervation, will probably incur your reſentment) I cannot avoid adding, that ſhe who really ſtruggles to govern her heart, rarely permits ſo unbounded an indulgence to her temper."

"And

"And how dare Lord Melrofs ufe me thus, Sir? Am I not his equal?"

"Compel me not, Madam, to anfwers, that would fhock and offend you."

"Oh, Sir, not to do that, would be to defeat the chief purport of your commiffion.—To be made a flave, where I have a right to command."

"And from whom, Madam, was that right derived?"

"I care not, Sir! it is enough that I poffefs it; if from Lord Melrofs, is this an apartment for his wife? Are thefe wretched garments, fuited to his rank, or mine?"

"No, Madam! but however harfh the truth, they are certainly fuited to her who has betray'd both. The wildnefs of your accufations, has extorted from the fincerity of my nature, fuch returns, as politenefs will but ill excufe. But why this abfurd grief, on an article fo unimportant? Is it not the mind that dignifies the garment?

ment? And will you not be one day too happy, if, in return for theſe ornaments now withdrawn, you regain that peace, and purity, which alone can give them luſtre. Each rank of life has its ſeparate duties; and when you recollect, that yours have been neglected, you muſt ſurely hold yourſelf a debtor to Providence, in allowing you ſtill to enjoy a thouſand advantages reſulting from the fulfilling thoſe duties in others. The laborious hand, Madam. that rais'd an apartment ſo deſpicable in your eyes, ſought perhaps, a ſuſpenſion from its labors upon ſtraw; and thoſe labours were ſuſpended, becauſe the conſciouſneſs of having diſcharg'd the humble duties of penury, left no void, or regret upon the ſoul. Yet tho' ſtill ſhelter'd, and cloath'd, by the efforts of thoſe incidental virtues, you abjur'd, you dare to murmur!—Let the humiliating parallel, render you more grateful;

ful; it will be the firſt ſtep towards rendering you more happy."

"Your notions of happineſs, Sir," return'd ſhe, "ſeem at leaſt conformable to your rank. You muſt not therefore be ſurpris'd, if mine have not the *honor* to reſemble them; ſince perhaps the menial habits of ſervitude, are no longer painful, where they are familiar."

"Indeed, Madam!" I replied coldly, "I wiſh it may prove ſo!—Since, however, you ſeem ſo perfectly ſatisfied as to the juſtice of your own opinions, will you give me leave to try, which of us can convert the other. Nor need I fear, any one will accuſe me of having allotted myſelf the eaſieſt taſk."

"I am no diſputant, Sir! nor ſhall I enter the lists, with ſo learned a gentleman as Mr. Nugent!"

"The learning neceſſary for ſuch an enquiry, Madam, as it is deriv'd from the heart, you will probably have the advant-

ment? And will you
happy, if, in return
now withdrawn, you
and purity, which a
luſtre. Each rank o
duties; and when you
have been neglected
hold yourſelf a debt
allowing you ſtill to e
vantages reſulting fro
duties in others. T
Madam, that rais'd
deſpicable in your eye
a ſuſpenſion from its
and thoſe labours
becauſe the conſciouſne
charg'd the humble duti
no void, or regret upon
tho' ſtill ſhelter'd, and
efforts of thoſe incidenta
jur'd, you dare to murmu
liating parallel, render

." Her features ſwell'd
at denied her the power
ıe ſat down, and roſe re-
ıes in a minute, glancing
y thing round the room,
pend in looks, that rage
erwiſe how to expreſs.

your emotion, Madam,
egative;" added I. "If
found happineſs in dreſs,
tion,—if thoſe erroneous
ı firſt ſeduc'd your duty
our huſband, have pro-
diſguſt, and preſent re-
e vainly ſought for hap-
hing but yourſelf, why
to that laſt trial? Why
the privation of enjoy-
r conſtituted your felici-
y from remorſe, and yet
bjure the ſweets that

 "Give

age in. Happineſs has been the grand object of your purſuit thro' life. Will your Ladyſhip condeſcend to inform me, in what circle of pleaſure you diſcovered it."

"You know I cannot, Sir," ſaid ſhe, ſullenly.

"I will aſſiſt your memory, Madam.—Perhaps it was in dreſs." I paus'd. She ſhook her head with diſdain: "perhaps in flattery." Again I paus'd and receiv'd the ſame ſilent anſwer. "Perhaps in diſſipation." She ſigh'd a heart-drawn negative. "Perhaps, Madam, in leſs juſtifiable purſuits."

"Sir!" ſaid ſhe, dropping her hand, and looking towards me with an angry contempt.

"The exquiſite delicacy, which ſtartles at the name of vice, Lady Melroſs, cannot, with juſtice, be allow'd to any, but an unſullied mind; and to ſuch, our ſex pay the nobleſt deference, that of imbib-

ing

ing their purity." Her features ſwell'd with a paſſion that denied her the power of utterance; ſhe ſat down, and roſe repeatedly ten times in a minute, glancing her eye on every thing round the room, but me, as if to ſpend in looks, that rage ſhe knew not otherwiſe how to expreſs.

"Your ſilence, your emotion, Madam, are a ſufficient negative;" added I. "If then you neither found happineſs in dreſs, flattery, or diſſipation,—if thoſe erroneous attachments which firſt ſeduc'd your duty from God, and your huſband, have produc'd only paſt diſguſt, and preſent regret,—if you have vainly ſought for happineſs in every thing but yourſelf, why not have recourſe to that laſt trial? Why ſo bitterly regret the privation of enjoyments, which never conſtituted your felicity? You cannot fly from remorſe, and yet you voluntarily abjure the ſweets that crown repentance."——

"Give me air! give me words," cried ſhe, eagerly ſtarting up. "I perceive, I am to be deſtroy'd by your inſults, and it is no matter how ſoon. I am already loſt to, abandon'd by, annihilated to the world; Oh God, that I were ſo indeed! nor ſhall it be long, before I am. Go, Sir, and tell my Lord, he has nothing to fear, either from my crimes, or my reproaches. My fate is determin'd. There was a time, (and ſhort are the years that have elaps'd ſince,) when fate itſelf, could hardly controul my deſires; but it has done more; it has ſhewn me their impotence, in their gratification; and left me nothing to deſire." The deep and broken tone, in which this was pronounc'd, the frantic energy of her countenance, with the ſettled deſpair that ſeem'd collected in her eyes, lately burning with fury, and, above all, the dreadful portrait ſhe had drawn of her own mind, now really touch'd me.

"And

"And thus, Madam," continued I, with a tone of tenderneſs, "by a ſeries of follies, and crimes, has a young and beautiful woman, been induc'd to think even of ſuicide. And that, to avoid no puniſhment but conſcience; ſince ſtill in a ſituation, to which virtue might have given happineſs, and reſignation, dignity. Do not, however, give way to deſpair. Life, Madam, like gold, is only valuable as it is uſed; when laviſhly ſquander'd, it is apt to purchaſe only cares to the poſſeſſor; but when nobly ſpent, the means of happineſs, both to ourſelves, and others."

"Would I *could* think like you," ſaid ſhe, ſighing; "but I have not feelings, I have not reflection; I am a different being. I have none of theſe refin'd, mental purſuits."

"Beware, Madam," ſaid I, "of the worſt of all errors; a falſe humility, is too often fatal; ſince it is putting the

garb of virtue, on a dangerous laſſitude of ſoul; ſome author ſays,

"His nature, no man can *o'er*-rate, and none,
"Can *under*-rate, his merit."——

The bounds of poſſibility, tho' the enquiry of all ages, have never yet been determin'd by any. And were we allow'd to deſpair, man might with equal propriety, mingle with quadrupeds, thro' the fear of not being able to poiſe himſelf upright.— Hope, is the bleſſing leaſt circumſcrib'd to the human mind, becauſe it is that which gives birth to every other;"—

"Do you then really think, I have any thing to hope?" interrupted ſhe, eagerly.

"Every thing, Madam!" return'd I, not imagining ſhe had in view, any pardon, but from Heaven; "a ſincere penitence, can never be rejected. Submit with reſignation, reflect ſeriouſly upon the paſt,

guard

guard againſt the future, and look forward to many happy days of innocence."

"You reſtore me to new life," cried ſhe, with eyes ſparkling thro' the beamy moiſture. "Now you are indeed my friend, Mr. Nugent!" She pauſed; but exultation, and vanity, mounted in crimſon floods to her cheek; and I ſaw the gay, and imperious Lady Melroſs burſt thro' the degradations, which for awhile had obſcur'd her. "If my Lord," continued ſhe, "ſhould one day generouſly condeſcend to pardon and forget my errors, he ſhould find my gratitude proportioned to his kindneſs, and that my heart has never been another's."

Before I could utter a reply, my looks had anticipated, Lady Somerſet ſwept in, with an air at once angry and confus'd; the ſcene that followed, was too abſurd, too ridiculous, to be deſcrib'd; unwilling to ſide openly with her niece, (thro' the fear of being involv'd with her,) and not

able to make her underſtand, that ſhe diſſembled, but to ſerve her, Lady Somerſet's perplexity roſe to its higheſt pitch; and Lady Melroſs, eager to gratify the ſpleen ſhe had ſo long ſuppreſt, on the only object in her power, obſtinately ſhut her eyes to every motive of prudence.—A grand quarrel ſoon enſued; and ſuch a quarrel, as defies deſcription. It was a female one indeed. Their age, their perſons, their follies, nay, their very vices, were alternately ridiculed, and expoſed, with the bitereſt malevolence. A thouſand little mean arts, a thouſand meaner wiſhes unknown to the world, were betray'd by the keenneſs of reproach, and the grey hairs of Lady Somerſet were derided, as the coverings of a depravity, which excited at once, my aſtoniſhment, and pity. A momentary pauſe (during which, their rage ſeem'd ſuſpended) firſt reminded them it had a witneſs. A dreary ſilence

lence ſucceeded; whilſt the eyes of each, alternately wander'd from the other, to me, as if unwilling to appropriate the reproach of having betray'd herſelf. Floods of tears were the conſequence, and they parted with mutual indignation. Lady Somerſet did me the honor of accepting my hand to her carriage, which ſtill waited, and inſtantly ſtept into it. It had hardly drove from the door, when Lord Melroſs met me in the hall; his air, was fiery, and impatient; in ſhort, I perceiv'd there was no option, but to give up the name of Obrien, when Sir George Irwin, by galloping up, for a moment ſuſpended the explanation.

Peter has brought me yours;* and as the length of this has already exceeded the bounds of moderation, I ſend it off



*Omitted.

and defer the remainder till my next.—Take no ſide in the affair, with your mother, who is, perhaps, by this time with you; and aſſure yourſelf, of having all further particulars, very ſhortly, from

*Your ever faithful, and affectionate,*

EDWARD NUGENT.

LET-

## LETTER CXV.

*To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*Stanton-Audley, April.*

YOUR note, my dear friend, I received with an aſtoniſhment, and terror, on finding you appriz'd of the diſcovery at Mount-Herbert, that were only abated by the calm manner which you have endeavour'd to aſſume; tho' much, I fear, from the ſtrength of your expreſſion with regard to Obrien, that he has given you additional cauſe of vexation. I wrote inſtantly to Edward, for the particulars of all that was paſſing at Mount-Herbert, and ſend you his anſwer, as I receiv'd it; having indeed, hardly had time for the peruſal. How will your heart be wrung, by the dread of that cruel event, it ſeems to prepare us for?—Yet if reaſon or per-

ſuaſion, can engage Lord Melroſs to be calm, we may depend on Mr. Nugent.—Prepare yourſelf, however, for the worſt; that worſt, to which the conſtitutional horrors of our ſex, add pangs, perhaps, almoſt as exquiſite, as can ariſe from its ſenſibilities.—Let me hear from you; and call up, I intreat, thoſe principles which have hitherto been your ornament, and ſupport.—Adieu, my beloved friend.

H. NUGENT.

LET-

## LETTER CXVI.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.*

*Winbrook, April.*

THO' much ſurpris'd at not receiving a line from you, after your abrupt departure, I cannot, my deareſt friend, defer, the account of an adventure, more ſingular, and ridiculous, than ever before fell within my knowledge; and I could almoſt perſuade myſelf, that ſylphs, fairies, or ſome aerial beings, muſt have aſſiſted, in a transformation ſo ludicrous. Laugh no longer at the ſcenes of romance! I defy it to match reality; nor did I ever read an adventure, avowedly fabulous, that could not be countenanced, by a ſurvey of that more wonderful volume, human life. Could you but have one ſingle glance at my little coif, ruſſet gown, and unadorn'd

unadorn'd apartment, you would be tempted, like me, to diſtruſt the evidence of your ſenſes. Let me (for the twentieth time) convince myſelf, I do not dream. No! it is certainly ſo; the thick lawn does not fade imperceptibly into tranſparent gauze; nor can all my ſelf-perſuaſion, convert the honeſt labours of ſome induſtrious houſe-wife, into the more ſplendid productions of the loom. And now, ſince (*vice verſa* to the common mode,) the butterfly has commenced grub, I will proceed to the manner of the metamorphoſis.

My uſual ſolitary ſupper, (that is, my tea,) being over very late yeſterday evening, I ſat down to read Blair.—I name my author, leſt you ſhould ſuſpect him (like that preſcrib'd in the *Diable boiteux*) to be the ſoporific, that took ſo powerful an effect upon my ſenſes. I never to my knowledge, ſhut my eyes over a book in my life; now, imagine my ſurpriſe, on

finding

finding I could not keep them open. I made ſeveral ineffectual attempts; walking at intervals about the room, till the deſire of ſleep got the better even of the abſurdity, and affecting to be indiſpos'd, I went up to my apartment. There, the candles ſtill burning, my hair hanging looſe over my ſhoulders, and in my wrapper, thanks I ſuppoſe to laudanum, I fell aſleep.—For not one ſyllable do I remember after, till I was waked by a broad glare of ſunſhine, which with the help of my watch, inform'd me, it was near eleven in the morning. I open'd my eyes on a ſcene ſo extraordinary, as quickly rouſed every faculty to aſtoniſhment: gently riſing on one elbow, with as much precaution, as if I thought myſelf in the tomb of Roſicruſius, where a ſingle motion might involve me in utter darkneſs, I was contented for ſome moments to look round in ſilence. My uſual apartment, elegant, tho' not ſplendid,

did, was converted into a rambling garret, ornamented with a paper which might properly have been taken for the firſt humble daub ever denominated a picture, by ſome of Noah's ſons, with a repreſentation of the birds and beaſts, creeping into the Ark. The furniture conſiſted of one chair, one table, a monſtrous pier-glaſs, and a ruſty grate; which, however, contain'd no fire. My firſt emotion at the ſight, was ſurpriſe, and the ſecond, laughter. I ſtarted from the bed, on which I had been laid, and began to contemplate the habiliments apparently deſign'd to adorn my fair perſon.—Theſe were, a little round cap, a ſtuff gown, and a common muſlin handkerchief, with an apron of the ſame. Whilſt turning them over, (rubbing my eyes at intervals, to convince myſelf I was awake,) I heard the door unlock, and in came, (neither ſylph, or fairy,) but my evil genius himſelf, in the ſhape of Mr. Obrien.

"Well

" Well my little Pamela !" ſaid he, advancing gayly, " already riſen ? I hoped to pay you a viſit *à la françoiſe*, this morning! How do you like your new apartment ?"

" So well, Sir !" return'd I, collecting my ſpirits, " that, as you have made a French entrance, I ſhall not be at all ſorry, if you take a French leave."

" Provoking gipſey," return'd he, laughing, " am I always to be ſo unacceptable ! always to meet thoſe frigid eyes, fraught with no other language, than, when ſhall I be rid of you ?"

" If my eyes are frigid," I replied, " I am glad they do ſo much juſtice to my feelings; for really conſidering we are yet but in April, you are not very laviſh in your ſacrifices to Ignus."

" The girl ſhall make you a fire," ſaid he caſting his eyes on the unwieldy quarry of ſteel (if I may uſe ſuch an expreſ-

ſion)

ſion,) which had paſs'd fifty years ago, under the denomination of a grate.

"The ſooner then, the better," added I; "otherwiſe, ſhe may chance to find an empty chimney; ſince by the ſcornful attitude in which your grate ſtands at preſent, I ſhall not be ſurpris'd, to ſee it ſtrut off." This ſilly ſpeech, which, however, gives ſome idea of the uncouth manner in which this piece of furniture was plac'd, made him ſmile again; and ſaying, he would ſend the maid, he reliev'd me by departing.—From her I might, juſtifiably perhaps, have aſk'd ſome explanation, of this ſcene; from him, I dared not; ſince I know, by cruel experience, that to ſmile, when he ſmiles, is abſolutely neceſſary, except we mean to be torn by the cutting *ſang froid* he always oppoſes to reproach. I contented myſelf, however, in ſilence; willing to wait the event for a time at leaſt, and found ſome amuſement in altering my new-faſhion'd robes, ſince I ſaw, I was

doom'd

doom'd to wear them, if I meant to avoid farcaſtic reflections, on my ſuppos'd mortification. At dinner time he came in from riding.

"Your ſervant, my dear!" ſaid he, throwing his hat negligently on the table, and himſelf back in his chair, with an air graceful enough, to thoſe who did not ſee "Othello's viſage, in his mind;" as is, unfortunately, the caſe with your poor friend. "You find I am become quite a domeſtic man! remember my promiſes, mind my wife, keep good hours, egad! who knows but I may be a Sir Charles Grandiſon at laſt! and that, you know, is a demi-god at leaſt!—What have you done with yourſelf, ſince I left you?"

"With *myſelf* not much," returned I, glancing my eye to the door, (which had been carefully lock'd) for a pretty obvious reaſon. "As to my employment, I have been at work."

"At

"At work! upon what?" return'd he, angrily looking round, in expectation, I ſuppoſe, of ſeeing ſome frame.

"It will not be eaſy for you to determine," I anſwer'd; "ſince I have been altering my cloaths."

"Thoſe!"——

"Theſe."

"And don't you think you have thrown away your time?"

"By no means! abſolute indolence, is of all things my averſion; and ſince I had no employment either for my head, or my feet, I thought myſelf fortunate in finding ſome for my fingers."

"By Jove," ſaid he, "thou wouldſt make the prettieſt pariſh girl, in England, and do more good than half the parſons in it."

"A much leſs diſcerning perſon than you are pleas'd to ſuppoſe me, would gueſs the reaſon of your thinking ſo."

"And

"And what may that be, pray?"

"Becauſe you never heard a quarter of them."

"They are playing the very devil at Mount-Herbert," ſaid he, with a half gape.

"At Mount-Herbert!" I repeated involuntarily; but recollecting myſelf, added, "I thought the family had been in town."

"They are juſt come down with a party.—And, *à propos*, Lady Helen deſir'd me to excuſe her not writing; Nugent, and ſhe, are both there. I believe, I ſhould have ſtay'd to walk a dance or two to night, if Lord Melroſs had not ſecur'd the only woman worth having."

"His lady, I ſuppoſe," ſaid I, with a forced ſmile. And, in my confuſion, inſenſible to the abſurdity I was guilty of.

"Pho! child!" return'd he, "when did you ever hear of a man's dancing with

his

his own wife?" I did not dare to ſay more; yet my curioſity was ſtrongly excited. The account was probable, tho' ſtrange; and your ſilence had already fill'd my mind with perplexity. That perplexity, I thought he ſeem'd to enjoy; for he half clos'd his eyes, as he leant back, and fixt them intently on me.

"Do you go to town this evening?" ſaid I, at laſt, (only thro' the wiſh of ſaying ſomething). "But what have we here?" on perceiving the man enter with a large parcel tied up in paper.

Examine, examine, my dear," returned he, laughing, "you will be vaſtly edified with your new library." I obey'd; and opening the firſt book, found it to be a collection of meditations, and penitential prayers.

"You ſee I am going to make a little Magdalen of you," he added, looking over my ſhoulder.

"No,"

"No," return'd I, "that cannot be! you may give me the form, but never the feelings of one; which is ſtriving to wound with an edgeleſs knife; ſince by furniſhing me with the prayers of remorſe, and repentance, you do but ſhew me my happineſs, in not greatly needing either."

"Woman to the laſt!" interrupted he. —"And ſo my little Cinderilla," ludicrouſly walking round me, "you would perſuade me that your virtue is deified enough to find no mortification in deſcending from lace and ſattin, to the humble habiliments of the *canaille*. Look round your apartment, child! who knows but this ſame force of ſentiment may convert paper into damaſk, and the powerful influence of a garret, bring your ſoul, as much nearer to the Gods, as your perſon."

"The force of ſentiment," return'd I, "does not conſiſt in elevating our ſituation to ourſelves, but in accomodating ourſelves to our ſituation; and really I ſhould

ſhould be a moſt unreaſonable woman, to be offended with your endeavors at familiarizing me, to the only apartment you intend to leave either of us. I ſhould be glad, however, of an additional indulgence, (for as ſuch, I ſuppoſe I am to conſider the books,) I mean that of pen and ink."

"No truly!" cried he contemptuouſly turning on his heel, "I mean to have no more ſcribbling I aſſure you; and don't know what the devil your ſex is taught it for, except to render miſchief hereditary, as well as inherent."

There are occaſions, Sir," replied I, ſomewhat piqued, "when yours is not the more fortunate for poſſeſſing that talent. But now, Mr. Obrien, we will, if you pleaſe, have a few moments of ſerious converſation. And give me leave to demand your reaſons for a conduct, which is not the leſs ſingular, for my not having hitherto noticed it."

"Serious!

"Serious! my dear creature, how canſt thou make ſuch a demand upon me? Is it poſſible I ſhould be able to aſſign a ſerious cauſe, for ſo whimſical an effect? Beſides," leading me with an air of drollery to the glaſs, "ſurvey thy own appearance, and tell me, if it is poſſible Heraclitus himſelf, could forbear laughing, to ſee ſo heroic a ſoul, dwindled down to ſo ignoble a diſguiſe?"

"I do ſurvey myſelf, Sir," ſaid I, compoſing my countenance, (for I could not help ſmiling, tho' I was thoroughly angry) "I am alter'd, but not degraded; for as what you are pleas'd to ſtile my heroics, did not conſiſt in externals, it is not in your power, however it may be in your will, to withdraw them. Solitude, may be inſipid to all, but can only be painful to the guilty; and as my chief ſources of pleaſure, have been lately confin'd to my own boſom, there is but little you can deprive me of. The mortificati-

ons of the vanity, in a well govern'd mind, are at worſt only tranſient; eſpecially when it is conſcious not only of private, but public exculpation, from deſerving them: and till you can rob me of the uſe of my underſtanding, you can never leave me utterly deſtitute of amuſement. In arbitrarily putting it out of my power to enjoy the bleſſings of reciprocal friendſhip, (as I cannot but ſuppoſe you have done, Sir, from the ſilence of Lady Helen,) you have indeed found the laſt teſt of my patience. But even that I can ſuſtain; ſince certain, no authority can prevent my image from being remembered with kindneſs, or my abſence with regret. —Avail yourſelf then, Mr. Obrien, of that power, my weak romance, firſt inveſted you with. I once made a merit of carrying a virtue to a failing,—you have corrected me for life; and to feel, to think, and act with moderation, has been its great object ſince. But uſe your

power,

power, Sir, with humanity; I ſubmit to part with luxuries, but I will ever proteſt againſt loſing my comforts; and as to the trivial difference in my appearance, (ſituated as I am) I have philoſophy enough to contemn, tho' not abſurdity enough to deſire it."

"And do you ſay this from your very ſoul?" ſaid he, after a pauſe. "Remember I aſk you ſerioufly, ſolemnly!"——

"Serioufly, then, I do!"

"Strange! very ſtrange!" he added, riſing and walking about the room; "you ſhall have a pen and ink." And with this promiſe, (which was immediately after fulfill'd,) he left me: for ſingular as it appears at firſt, the man, who has ruin'd my fortune, and deſtroy'd my peace, who has ſeen me ſupport the moſt agonizing ſtruggles with indifference, was ſtruck with a ſentiment of remorſe, on finding me capable of yielding calmly to a mere external degradation. Unable to judge of the feel-

ings of my heart, he was yet alive to thoſe of my pride, and ſilently acknowledg'd that ſpecies of ſuperiority, which enabled me to controul it.

I now ſat down to write to you, and had finiſh'd my third page, when the diſagreeableneſs of having no window curtains, induc'd me to riſe, in order to change my poſition. I look'd thro' the ſaſh, and ſaw the night was cloudy, when my eye was attracted by a moving light in the garden; on my nearer examination, I perceiv'd it was a lanthorn, tho' I ſaw not the perſon who held it, and forgot, in my ſurpriſe, that I was viſible to him; the candles being behind me. Whilſt contemplating it, I was ſtartled by the ſudden glaring of the light, (proceeding as I ſuppoſe from the opening of the lanthorn) before which a letter was held up. For an inſtant I ſtarted back; but, returning, the ſign was immediately repeated; nor could

I doubt, but that the epiſtle was for me: how to attain it, became the grand object of my ſpeculations, when I fortunately recollected a piece of ſhaded ribbon I had put in my pocket-book, in order to match, the firſt time I went to town. —For this treaſure I eagerly ſought; and holding one end of it in my hand, ſuffer'd the card to unroll on the outſide of the window; the lanthorn ſeem'd for a moment to grope over the ground, and the letter was ſoon after held up, to which I perceiv'd the ribbon was faſten'd. My impatience now grew very great, and the ſtring, of conſequence, ſeem'd everlaſting; at length, I graſped the prize, and, ſatisfied in my own mind, that it came from you, with ſome very intereſting intelligence, eagerly tore it open; but gueſs my indignation on ſeeing the ſignature of "William Nugent." I flirted the letter away with the air of a Statira, and then pick'd it up again, with one better ſuited to my appearance. The

contents consisted of heavy censures of Mr. Obrien's conduct towards me, a comfortable dose of flattery, and liberal offers of assistance; concluding with a request, that I would answer it immediately, or, if depriv'd of pen and ink, honor the letter by kissing it at the window, and depend on the writer for placing me, in a few days, far above the utmost malice of Mr. Obrien. You will easily imagine my countenance at this modest request. For a moment I stood irresolute, as to the manner of shewing my indignation; till the idea struck me of extinguishing the candles, and diverting myself with seeing my *Ignus Fatuus*, glide impatiently about the garden. The scene was ludicrous enough to divert one who had not much besides to amuse her. Sometimes I beheld it exalted in the air, and sometimes as if meekly intreating on the ground; now whisk'd about abruptly in wrath,

wrath, and then displaying its full blaze in humble atonement; still I was inflexible; and continued to divert myself in obscurity, with the various evolutions, both pacific, and angry, till I lost it altogether, and the moon bursting forth from those clouds she had long irradiated with bright skirts of a rich yellow, fading imperceptibly into silver, put both those and the stars to flight, and seem'd to reign a solitary queen, thro' the blue concave, which bounded my view. Her beams threw a long stream of light upon the Thames, and a tranquil lustre upon every object; whilst the dashing of distant oars, alone interrupted the profound silence of the evening. The charms of a devout pensiveness, took possession of my whole soul. I lifted my heart in secret to that Divine Being, who allows his creatures to mingle with him in thought, and feel myself ennobled. The spirits of my parents, the tender recollection of my friends, all

I had loſt, and all I had yet to loſe, preſt on my memory. But it was not with anguiſh; I ſaw one world only enrich'd, by the impoveriſhing of another. I ſhed tears, but they fell unconſciouſly, and ſeem'd the ſacred atteſtation of a thouſand future virtues; devotion, that pure, and lambent flame, which burns upon the altar of the heart, ſeem'd to irradiate its faculties; a veſtal fire, which, once extinguiſh'd, is the fatal omen of long and merited calamities.

Hail precious moments! ſtol'n from the black waſte
Of murder'd time, auſpicious midnight, hail!
The world excluded, every paſſion huſh'd,
Here the ſoul ſits in council; ponders paſt,
Predeſtines future action. Sees, not feels
Tumultuous life, and reaſons with the ſtorm.

In this diſpoſition I went to bed; and you will not be ſurpris'd, when I add, that I roſe the next morning in better health, than I have been for ſome time paſt.—

My

My spirits, exhausted by perpetual struggles, receiv'd a new turn from the whimsical alteration in my life, and secluded alike from domestic cares, or silent temptation, my heart seem'd reliev'd from the toil of combating itself. I had scarce done breakfast, when Mr. Obrien came in, and, (for he has a barbarous gayety of disposition,) with that smiling, lively air, peculiar to him; tho' from his conversation, I have reason to suppose, that if he had been touch'd with any sentiment in my favour, it had by this time, entirely subsided.

"Once more, good day!" said he. "How does the second morning dawn upon you? As full of philosophy as the first? Pray, by what secret do you call up the vermilion of June, in the frosts of April? No need of a window in that bosom, too transparent, I am tempted to think for hypocrisy. And yet—but thou'rt an incomprehensible altogether. Yesterday, Madam, you

were desirous of a little serious conversation; to-day I am in the humour to grant your request. I am going presently to Richmond, where I believe I shall dine: in the interim, I have taken some precautions, which you will do wisely not to attempt to frustrate; for know Madam!" fixing his eyes sternly upon me, "neither you, nor your officious confidant have any further power of controuling me. Unravel the mystery as you can; and tremble to think, that it depends on the conduct of an irritated fool, to regulate mine; since I will not be outdone in revenge, even tho' it should prove an Italian one."

"Nor I, in resignation, Sir," return'd I, collecting that blood, which had begun to thrill from my cheek, to my heart.—"To shew you, however, the absurdity of all precautions, where virtue is not the dictate of sentiment, know, in your turn, that, tho' apparently secluded from the world, I have been able to receive, a letter, and

might,

might, could I have resolv'd to forfeit my own esteem, have answer'd it; and that in such a manner, as totally to defeat your views, or resentment: since you have deprived yourself of the power of testifying it to the writer." He ran it over twice, without a single word to me; honoring Sir William, however, at intervals, with some epithets, which would not have been at all the more acceptable for being deserved: and, afterwards, put it very carefully in his pocket-book; saying, "it might be of service;" in extorting pecuniary assistance, I have since thought.

And thus, my dear, ends my chequer'd epistle. I have made no breaks in it, because none occurr'd that would not have destroy'd the thread of my narrative.—And having been oppreſt since dinner, with a violent head-ach, I find myself under the necessity of yielding to it.—The maid who has seen me writing, has

offer'd to convey this to the poſt. Perhaps, after all, it may never reach you, and be only a trick to obtain it. But I will not ſuſpect unreaſonably; nor do I fear to ſtand the teſt even of Mr. Obrien's peruſal, where truth alone has dictated. His Italian revenge, with the hints that preceded it, embitter my ſolitude, by fears I dread to find realiz'd.—Lord Melroſs, perhaps—That idea has conjur'd up a thouſand phantoms of rage, infamy, and murder. If there is a poſſibility of ſending me a ſingle line, I need not ſolicit your friendſhip; you will feel all the fears, and all the expectations of,

*Your ever Affectionate,*

S. OBRIEN.

LET-

## LETTER CXVII.

*To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*Stanton-Audley, April.*

ADVISE me, dear Edward, how I shall proceed. On the day of my arrival at Stanton-Audley, I had a short note from Mrs. Obrien (as I suppos'd) requesting to know every thing that passed; in consequence of which, I sent her your letters. The whole, however, by that of hers which I enclose, I am now convinc'd, was a trick of Mr. Obrien, who means to retaliate upon her. How shall I extricate her from this difficulty? If I go to Winbrook, I think he will not refuse my seeing her, and something must be done. I write this that it may be ready to send back by the servant, when

he

he brings yours, which is expected every moment, with an impatience you may easily imagine by

*Your affectionate,*

HELEN NUGENT.

LET-

## LETTER CXVIII.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mr. Nugent.*

*Mount-Herbert.*

THE arrival of Sir George, (as mention'd in my laſt,) oblig'd Lord Melroſs to a few moments of diſſimulation.

"My dear friend," ſaid he, advancing, "to what do I owe this pleaſure?"

"To a circumſtance, my Lord," return'd the Baronet, gravely, "which I ſhould have been much better pleas'd, you had not been indebted to."

"Pardon me, Sir George," replied Lord Melroſs, with equal gravity. "Had you done me the honor to inform me, I was to expect a viſitor, and not a friend, I ſhould have known how to addreſs you with more propriety." To this, the other made a long preamble, by way of anſwer; and

and concluded with saying, that, "*in short*, he must frankly own, he had heard, Lady Melrose was treated very ill."

"Be more frank, Sir George," said his friend, colouring deeply, "and add, that you believe it."

"He could not say but he did."

"My dear Sir George," cried I anticipating the indignant eye of Lord Melrose. "He must, however, beg leave to observe, that it would be very hard to misconstrue the errors of a young and beautiful woman, into crimes."

"My dear Sir George," again cried I——

"That for his own part he saw nothing criminal in her conduct."—And again he beg'd leave to observe something, which I clearly discern'd Lord Melrose would never have patience to hear. Once more, then, I interrupted him;

"Sir George, when you are fully acquainted with the circumstances that have past,

paſt, I am well aſſur'd you will find ſufficient cauſe to juſtify the conſequence: —allow me to explain"——

"Mr. Nugent, *I* have had the honor of being known for ſome years to Lord Melroſs. I do not know whether his Lordſhip has forgot it."

"When I have, Sir George," return'd the latter, ſtifling his chagrin, "I muſt at the ſame time, forget a thouſand favours which are indelibly impreſs'd upon my heart. To your knowledge of that heart, I refer you for my juſtification.—The woman, whom you ſo warmly defend, has betray'd, and diſgrac'd me;—I need not,—indeed cannot, add more." He aroſe.

"What chimeras have we here," ſaid the Baronet, "what probabilities, what proofs. —Theſe mad paſſions, my Lord, are your maſters."

"Allow

"Allow me to leave you, Sir George; I am not equal to a cool difcuffion upon this fubject"——

"I am very fenfible, that the perfuafions of your friends"——

"Allow me, Sir George, to leave you"—

"The perfuafions of your friends, I fay"—

"Infupportable"——he ftopt; *obftinacy*, fhould have followed; but a fmall remains of reafon ftept in, to intercept the word.

"Their perfuafions, and the impertinencies of the young Lord Somerfet, induc'd you to take a wife, to whom you were not warmly attach'd. But at leaft recollect"——Back ftept Lord Melrofs from the door, near which he ftill ftood, with an air that had volumes in it, had Sir George been a phyfiognomift.

"The impertinencies of Lord Somerfet, induce *me* to take a wife! Do I hear you

you right, Sir George? Lord Somerset influence my actions!"——

"Not absolutely induce!" return'd the Baronet with a wild stare.

"*Absolutely* induce!" again re-echoed his friend. That tone, and that look, my good Lord, in a Court of Justice, thought I, would make the witness be forsworn, and an honest man impeach himself.—

"Absolutely induce! Edward, I dream surely!—Sir George, I am now calm;—explain this matter fairly to me, as it stands in your ideas, or those of the world, which I suppose are pretty nearly the same.—I shall be glad to unravel this mystery, and clear up some points, in which both, I believe, have widely mistaken my character."

Sir George protested he had nothing to explain; but the protestation came too late. The blunder was now irretrievable; and the thoughtful calm which succeeded in the mind of Lord Melross,

convinc'd

convinc'd me the indignity funk deep in it. The former now requeſted he might ſee Janetta, and was accordingly admitted. Left *tête à tête* with our friend, I at leaſt hoped to win from the frankneſs of his diſpoſition, what were his ſentiments and intentions; but as the velocity of motion, moſt reſemble ſtillneſs, ſo did his mind derive an apparent ſteadineſs, from its activity. He walk'd about the room for ſome moments in ſilence, and then abruptly demanded of me, the name I had engag'd to win from Lady Melroſs.

"The moment of diſſimulation, my Lord," ſaid I, "is paſt. Reaſon, humanity, in a word, that which is the eſſence of all our faculties, and virtues, principle, has had time to reſume its empire in your boſom. Remember your ſword is due to your country, your life to your Creator. After this preface, it will be unneceſſary to add, I know the villain. I have long

known

known him. In that, as well as affirming that I had left the letters in Grosvenor-Square, I voluntarily deceiv'd you, and forfeited for once, the hitherto, unbiafs'd veracity of my own character, that I might allow you time to recover the nobler part of yours. Paffion, pride, cuftom, will all demand their victim: love, honor, and humanity, may fpare the facrifice, when I add to it the name of *Obrien.*" He ftarted, look'd up at me, and then caft down his eyes, with the confciounefs of incontroulable emotion; whilft a faint flufh'd paft over his cheek, to which the fame mortal paleneefs fucceeded, that had attended the firft difcovery. But if his foul is as haughty as his eye, there lives not that being, who can injure him with impunity.

"The name of Obrien," continued I, was once diftinguifh'd to you, as that of a friend. A diftinction it loft, only to find

find a tenderer, in your attachment to his wife. By adopting the cuſtomary methods of revenge, you will cut off the only poſſible hope of a tye, which however circumſtances now oppoſe it, may one day render you happy; and involve the woman you beſt love, in horror, poverty, and grief. He ſigh'd, even to an agony of paſſion. And leaning with one hand over his eyes, motion'd to me with the other to be ſilent.

"To adviſe, my Lord," continued I, "is my privilege; but to decide, muſt finally be yours. On the cuſtom of duelling in general, I ſpare myſelf all arguments, but the concluſive one open to every heart; that he who adopts it, voluntarily entails the heights of miſery on all he loves, merely to avoid the cenſures of all whom he contemns." Again he ſigh'd, with reſtleſs perturbation; and, hearing the footſtep of Sir George, I went eagerly out of the room, to ſtop him. With

ſome

ſome difficulty, I ſucceeded: and drawing him into the garden, explain'd in the cleareſt manner I was able, every circumſtance that had paſs'd. But the prepoſſeſſions of weak minds, are not eaſily overturn'd, and the obſtinacy that is their uſual attendant, often ſtrengthens the opinion we aim at ſubverting. "He did not know, he could not ſee," any thing, I found, but what he choſe to know, or ſee; and his conference with Lady Melroſs, had rooted every prejudice in her favor. —I did not aim at a confirmation, I might have offer'd, in the letters which I ſtill poſſeſt, having with-held them, as Lord Melroſs had not immediately made the demand, leſt they ſhould prove freſh fuel to his indignation. They are not mine; nor ought in propriety to have eſcap'd me, even to my better-ſelf.

On my return into the houſe, I found Lord Somerſet had been with our friend. Their

Their conference was ſhort.—Do not be alarm'd, my dear!—Your brother is wounded, it is true; but not dangerouſly ſo; nor can we, with juſtice, cenſure an action, which proceeded rather from a combination of unfortunate circumſtances, than intention. Had he arrived at any period but one ſo immediately ſubſequent to Sir George's intelligence, their meeting would have been entirely pacific; as it was, it produc'd an appointment for the enſuing morning, which Lord Melroſs roſe, before it was light, to fulfil. This was the firſt intelligence we receiv'd; and the anxiety it left us in, may eaſily be imagin'd. Three hours were paſt in a ſtate of expectation, that defied every effort of philoſophy. To purſue him, (determin'd, collected as he now muſt be) was to aſſume a power, he would himſelf, perhaps, reſent; and all other efforts were abſurd.—At noon, we had a ſhort note, dated

Richmond,

Richmond, whither he inform'd us he had accompanied Lord Somerſet, to ſee his Lordſhip's wound dreſt, as well as to ſtop an effuſion of blood from his own arm, which had been ſlightly grazed. He requeſted that Lady Melroſs might immediately leave Mount-Herbert, ſince this *rencontre* muſt effectually publiſh the ſecret of her diſgrace, and attract general curioſity; adding, that he would write to her, when at Bruton-Court, and ſhould eſteem it a particular obligation, if Sir George would ſettle every thing relative to her journey. A private poſtcript informed me, that he had only invented this commiſſion to engage the Baronet from coming to him at that juncture, and hinted, that it might be better if I did not, ſince it would ſtrengthen the illiberal diſguſt, already conceived by that gentleman againſt me.

Sir George had now a fair opportunity for a buſtle, with which he was the better

ſatisfied, ſince my interference has long been as diſagreeable to him as to Lady Somerſet, nor have either of them diſcernment enough to diſtinguiſh the influence of ſentiment, from the officiouſneſs of curioſity. —He voluntarily engaged himſelf to eſcort Janetta ſome miles on her journey, and encourages in her, but too much, I fear, thoſe chimerical hopes of reconciliation, which time, and the further explanation of Lord Melroſs, alone can annihilate: the latter indeed, diſabled by the nature of his wound, from any immediate call upon Obrien, may now be induced to accept the cooler alternative of a divorce.——The raſhneſs of Lord Somerſet, has received a check which may have future good conſequences, and the heavy cloud, long threatening to burſt in thunder over all, perhaps be averted. To theſe favorable proſpects, let me add, the hope of returning to the beſt

beſt beloved of my heart, and of folding her once more to that of her,

*Ever Faithful and Affectionate,*

EDWARD NUGENT.

## LETTER CXIX.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.*

*London. April.*

BY a miracle I am enabled to tell you that I live;—yes, my beloved friend, I now live indeed, for I owe my being, to him from whom, on earth, it derives its higheſt value. Ah, why are you not here? Has rapture any language but tears? In the moments of tremulous ſenſibility, when thoſe only are its expletives, how ſweet, how deſirable is the hand of friendſhip, to catch them ere they return upon the heart.—Oh, you to whom mine has ſo long been known, you, whom neither time, nor abſence have yet alienated, receive, and cheriſh its tendereſt effuſions! —Often, my dear and eſtimable friend, have

have you ſigh'd, but never, I hope, will you bluſh for her you have diſtinguiſh'd.

My laſt, I think, brought you down to that ſingular period, which compleating my gradual deſcent from liberty and affluence, left me only expoſed to one bitter ſtruggle. My letter I had ſcarce found an opportunity of diſpatching, before Mr. Obrien came in; but plunged in a gloom ſo unuſual, that, tho' unable to gueſs even at the events which had cauſed it, I was at no loſs to diſcover they muſt deeply concern himſelf.—Devoid of all thoſe gentler affections, from which half the world derive either their pleaſures, or their cares, accuſtomed to ſmile at every remoter evil, to conſider reflection upon the paſt as a folly, and upon the future as a curſe, Mr. Obrien lives ſolely to the preſent: to its temptations, he ſacrifices madly every tie either of honor, or morality; and from its diſappointments, en-

dures the turbulent anguiſh, or more dreadful deſpondency, from which gentler minds ſhrink with horror. Self-gratification, that *ignis fatuus*, which ſpringing originally from corruption, ever evades the graſp, and reſolves itſelf at laſt into its native groſſneſs, ſparkles continually before him, and the moment it ſinks, ſeems to leave the whole creation in darkneſs.—I wonder not the votaries of pleaſure are ſuicides, ſince the deadly glooms that ſucceed her reign, ſeem almoſt to anticipate mortality. To aim at regulating a mind thus at war with itſelf, was too formidable an undertaking.—Yet ſickening, I knew not why, with vague and painful apprehenſion, a thouſand times did I turn my dubious eyes on Mr. Obrien, with that enquiring ſympathy his conſtantly repelled. —He was rous'd from his *rêverie* by the delivery of a note, which he tore open, on reading the ſuperſcription, with an eagerneſs that alone might have excited

my

my curiofity.—Curiofity, did I fay!—Alas, a thoufand emotions ftarted in painful flufhes to my cheeks, on fancying I difcern'd the hand of Lady Melrofs.—He read the billet twice; paufed—hefitated—fmiled with a mixture of doubt and exultation, and abruptly quitting the room, left me to all the mifery of incertitude.—Loft in one of thofe painful meditations when the fickening fenfes feem to contract and bury themfelves in the heart, leaving that fcarce confcious of its own emotions, I walk'd for a confiderable time up and down my apartment.—The door of it remained unlocked; the billet, I ftrongly fufpected to be from Lady Melrofs, and the fituation of Mr. Obrien's mind, left me no doubt but an important fcheme engrofs'd it.—Every thing combined to urge me to fome active meafure; yet over thofe events which alone could direct me, there was fpread a heavy and myfterious cloud,

which all my efforts could not penetrate.—Even if an assignation was intended, would my interference be of any avail? —Alas, when had it ever been so!—To act for myself was now to decide my fate; and the melancholy conviction that I had nothing to fear but from my own heart, determined me, however difficult the struggle, to remain passive to every future occurrence of fortune.—A suffocation I was not sensible of, till its violence awaken'd every faculty into terror, suddenly struck me with the idea of fire. —The evening was closing ere Mr. Obrien left me, and my uneasy meditations had not allowed me to reflect that I had pursued them without any other light than that afforded by the dying embers from the grate. I lifted my eyes in astonishment on perceiving myself surrounded by a faint smoke, but my very soul died within me, when, precipitately opening the door, I found the smother increas'd

creas'd on the ſtairs.—With that agonizing ſenſe of terror which ſprings at once from conſtitution and reaſon, I flew to my own apartment below: but the gaining it was only a final conviction of my danger; ſince from under the windows I ſaw a new and immenſe cloud of black ſmoke roll over the houſe, and almoſt obſcure the trees which ſurrounded it; whilſt the faint view I caught, only preſented me a few unknown faces, over which gleam'd a dim and terrible light.—Shouts, ſcreams, and various indiſtinct noiſes invaded the ſilence of evening, and ſtupified, rather than encouraged me; nor could I have been ſo far wrapt up in reflection, as not to have been ſenſible of them before, had not the room I inhabited, by lying backwards and high, effectually precluded all alarm from the front of the houſe. I flew to the ſtairs, but the flames raged with fury in the ſtudy, and ſpread terror around. I, nevertheleſs,

hazarded a few ſteps, but fainting and terrified, returned almoſt immediately, and for the firſt time uttered an involuntary ſhriek. A thouſand confuſed ſounds were reverberated upon my ear, but none that ſeem'd to promiſe me relief.—I tore down my hair, I wrung my hands, and traverſing the apartments in an agony beyond all rational ſenſation of fear, again ſhriek'd thro' deſpair. One dear, one well known voice alone replied to me, whoſe magical influence ſeem'd to recall my ſcattered faculties. Directed by the ſound, I ſtarted eagerly forward, and ſunk at the feet of Lord Melroſs.

"Save me, ſave me," cried I, with a phrenzical eagerneſs.—He claſp'd me to his boſom, utter'd a thouſand vague and ardent expreſſions of tenderneſs, leading me at the ſame moment towards the ſtair-caſe, whence turning, with an air he vainly ſtrove to render collected, I ſaw it was now in flames.

flames. The powerful protection of his presence had, however, restored my senses, and recollection returning with reason, I led thro' a passage, which communicating with the servants rooms, gave us thro' them the chance of escaping. The joyful confirmation was too powerful for my frame, and I recollect nothing more, till revived by a soft breeze, I open'd my eyes on a scene far different from the horrible and tumultuous one I had quitted. We were on the rustic seat you may remember in the meadow beyond the house. The sober grey of the evening was deepen'd by the thick foliage which spread over us, while the faint lustre that still stream'd from the west only allow'd my heart to discern the features dearest to it, and the jarring voices from Winbrook, borne a contrary way by the wind, died faintly upon my ear. Revive, did I say! rather, I began to live; for till I cease to do so, the sweet sensation that took possession of my mind,

will never be effaced from it. It was not joy—it was not tranſport—it was not an oppreſſive pleaſure, where the ſenſe, as when fainting under the odours of ſome exquiſite flower, aches with delight;—it was like the breeze, which having paſt over the whole boſom of nature, ſeems to have exhaled and blended every thing in it moſt exquiſite. The voice of Lord Melroſs diſſolved the illuſion:—the damp—the air—the evening, all became the ſubjects of his fear: he preſt to convey me to a place of ſafety; alas! I had forgotten his arms were not ſuch, and the recollection firſt convey'd a pang. —Joy, pleaſure, hope, thoſe lively embers ſtill glowing in my ſoul, which but a moment before had kindled to ſo bright a blaze, were ſuddenly damped. I ſlowly aroſe, and prepared to follow him:—overwhelmed with the conſciouſneſs of having received, and returned, expreſſions of attachment ill-ſuiting my ſituation, and

and which the tender familiarity of his manner, convinced me he had not forgotten. We croſſed the meadow, and ſtruck into the road where his phaeton was waiting; one ſervant only attended, but as he held two horſes, I ſuppoſed his companion was gone to aſſiſt at Winbrook.

With what different emotions were Lord Melroſs and myſelf then agitated: he, all anxiety, thought thoſe moments ages which detain'd me, whilſt I on the contrary, prolong'd them by a voluntary tedioſneſs, ſince every one that paſt ſtole ſomewhat from a happineſs, the ſucceeding were totally to annihilate. Engroſs'd by the care of the horſes, whoſe ſpirit he was ill able to rein, from having hurt his arm by ſome accident in the morning, he could now only give me momentary proofs of his attention, and ready every inſtant to check the turbulent rapidity with which we drove, I ſtrove by a ſilence, doubtleſs

ſufficiently

ſufficiently ſingular, to conceal thoſe tears, the ſoothing ſounds of his voice repeatedly drew forth. In ſomewhat more than a quarter of an hour we drew up by a gate that ſtruck off from the road, and my Lord ſprung out.—Rous'd from my torpor by his attempt to aſſiſt me, I voluntarily ſtretch'd out that hand, I had ſo often, ſo inexorably withdrawn, and repeated in a voice which ſufficiently betray'd my emotion, "We are going then to ſeparate." "Never," return'd he warmly, "but at the hazard of leſs precious drops than theſe." Then giving the horſes in charge to the ſervant, he led me acroſs the field, over a ſmall wooden bridge, which brought us to a cottage I immediately recognized.—It was that he rebuilt after it was blown down, and the ſituation of which, tempted him to furniſh thoſe pretty ruſtic apartments where we have ſo often drank tea.—I now for the firſt time began to diſtruſt his intention.

"For

"For Heaven's ſake, where are you leading me?" cried I.

"A few moments of confidence, my Life," return'd he, "and truſt to a heart that adores you." I was weak enough to follow him into the cottage, where we found a woman extremely old and decrepid, who was ſpinning, whilſt a young labourer ſlept in an oppoſite corner, to both of whom, the entrance of Lord Melroſs occaſioned no little confuſion. Alarmed, agitated, and bluſhing at the weakneſs I had not power to refiſt, I ſuffer'd the latter to lead me to the apartment above, nor was I then ſtruck with the ſingularity of finding it lighted up, and ready apparently for my reception. Lord Melroſs remained a moment behind, giving ſome directions for his ſervant, but in a voice ſo low and indiſtinct, that I am afraid my utmoſt partiality cannot acquit him of a deſign to make me ſuppoſe, he was ſending for a more proper conveyance than the phaeton.

"You

"You have ſaved me, my Lord," ſaid I, on his entrance, correcting as much as poſſible, the tremor of my voice, "by an exemplary courage and generoſity, from the moſt dreadful, perhaps, of all fates.—Shall I intreat you to add to the favour, by informing me in what manner I may return to——my friends."—The laſt words trembled on my lips; the name of Mr. Obrien, tho' the propereſt, the only one I ought to have pronounced, obſtinately retreated from them, and my heart repelled the ſober dictates of my reaſon.

"And have you then thoſe to ſeek?" replied he, obliging me to ſit down, and placing himſelf next me; "I hoped to have been honored by ranking amidſt the firſt: a title however ſo unequal to the ardor of my wiſhes, that it can only be deſirable, as it permits me to aſpire to another.—Hear me," continued he, with redoubled emotion on perceiving mine;—

"I

"I underſtand but too well thoſe anticipating, thoſe indignant glances.—At a moment, that has ever ſince been an æra in my life, you accuſed me, and truly, of doing injuſtice to your character; yet even then, tho' ſenſible only of your perſonal charms, my very ſoul adored you.—Ah, you have been but too amply avenged for the momentary blindneſs. When to the graces of form, I diſcerned a mind capable of eclipſing even them"—

"My Lord!"—

"Silence me not," interrupted he, with a tender vehemence;—You muſt not, nay, you cannot; it is no longer a weak, a frivolous paſſion that throws me at your feet, with the light gallantry, due only to the light; it is a ſtrong, an unconquerable feeling, equally eſtabliſhed by every ſenſe and every ſentiment. When with this perfect form, that noble and elevated underſtanding," continued he, ſtill ſoftening his eyes

eyes and voice, "I was happy enough to find a heart"——

"Ah hold, my Lord," cried I, rising in the utmost agitation, "at least weigh well what you are about to say, and blot from your memory, if possible, a weakness which I can never think of without shame"——

"Nor I," continued he, "without transport. In this moment, the happiest, the only happy one of my life, my heart demands to be heard: no forms, no coldness can silence it; and even those timid eyes, I will for once venture to believe averted rather with softness than distaste."—Alas, my friend, he judged but too truly; those weak mirrors of my soul reflected all its tenderness.—Lost in the pleasure of loving and of being beloved, a powerful and sweet enchantment seem'd to steal over my senses, to debilitate my reason, and unnerve my heart. The habits of that heart, however, involuntarily recurred;

recurred; the momentary delusion that bewilder'd, misled, and had almost betray'd it, sunk like the grosser particles of atmosphere, and left it pure and unclouded. —In my life, grief had risen upon grief, and struggle upon struggle.—To look up to my Creator, with the consciousness of innocence had so long been its blessing, that it was now become necessary.— An impulse more rapid than reflection, more strong than reason, impress'd this conviction, at the very moment I felt most inclined to regret any; it had been stamp'd by my tears, and was never to be effaced.—In fine, I sigh'd, I trembled, and recover'd.—But what eloquence could silence that dangerous lover, who sensible of his influence, now claim'd it all! —The latitude of sex and custom, the insupportable recollection of his wrongs, the overwhelming torrent of his passion, swept away those boundaries which insurmountably circumscribed me. In a tumult of

indignation,

indignation, he reproached me, even bitterly reproach'd me, with having bestowed that hand on another, which united with his, might have fixt the happiness of both. Dissimulation became then too difficult a task.—To be no longer the object of his love, was to lose a distinction, acquired but through his weakness, and valuable, perhaps, only through my own.—But to hazard his esteem,—to have the grief of hearing myself upbraided for the most painful, the most cruel disappointment of my life,—it was insupportable; it urged me to dare every thing; and the transports of his indignation, first discovered to me, that in unveiling the fatal machination which separated me from him, and united me to Obrien, I had hazarded the existence of both.—It was now my turn to soothe, to intreat, to supplicate; Oh Heavens, how severe was the struggle, when reduced to work upon a passion I dared not

indulge,

indulge, to use an influence I trembled to hear him avow, to flatter hopes I blush'd to participate, I found no reward but in the consciousness of rectitude.—Could I at the very moment when I most felt its value, divest myself of that glorious support, and justify the example of a libertine who had left me no other blessing?—Accustom'd to refer every minuter action to the examination of my own bosom, could any sophistry enable me to set that powerful judge aside?—And in ceasing to be the happiness of my life, would it not involuntarily become its curse?—"Leave me then, my Lord," cried I repeatedly, with a sort of wild enthusiasm, "leave me, if you wish to prove your attachment sincere.—To make me happy, is not in your power, and can it be in your will, to make me otherwise?—Alas, it is not indifference, it is not fear, or even the dictates of a justifiable prudence which induce me to banish you; it

is

is a powerful combination of principles, that have ſunk deep into my ſoul, and been cultivated there, till they now riſe ſpontaneouſly. Yet think not you are abſent from, tho' you leave me;—in thoſe moments when your image will be all that remains to me of happineſs, ſuffer me at leaſt to remember without remorſe, that I have loved you, and without ſhame, to acknowledge myſelf beloved." To this impaſſion'd rant (for what romance, my dear, is like that of an agitated heart?) far from being convinced, he return'd every illuſive, and importunate ſolicitation; when both were ſtruck as with the noiſe of ſome perſon moving in the adjoining chamber.—Sex inſtantly predominated in each: for whilſt I ſunk back half fainting, he ſtarted from his knees, and with a haughty precipitation threw open the intermediate door.—Gracious Heaven, what were our ſenſations, when we found ourſelves under the ſame roof with Lady Melroſs,

rofs. *His* eyes—I thought I had feen all their expreffion, but never, never could I furvive a look like that he gave her; whilft with a tone that almoft excluded reply, he interrogated her as to the motives of her being there. Pale—trembling—fick at the very heart, I felt all the degradation to which I was expofed.—My appearance fo fingular;—my cheek yet fuffufed with the mingled glow of anxiety and love;—my hair fallen to my waift, and hanging loofely over my fhoulders;—alone with Lord Melrofs at fuch a time—in fuch a place—one only barrier arofe between me and infamy.—Janetta, if the witnefs of my tendernefs, had at leaft been the witnefs of my innocence too:—with her it refted to avow it, and if yet one fpark of honor or humanity remain'd, that avowal would neceffarily be made. The firft impulfe of grief and terror, flowly fubfided into felf-congratulation. By a ftrange

and

and ſingular fatality, the event which had appeared the completion of diſgrace, was in fact the only one that could reſcue me from it; and when I found that the accident of her being indiſpoſed on the road to Bruton-Court, had induced Sir George Irwin to place Lady Melroſs in a cottage where ſhe had ſpent many innocent and happy hours, rather than expoſe her to the mortification of going back to Mount-Herbert, or the gaze of a public Inn, my courage and my hopes revived.—My Lord, however, could neither conquer his agitation or reſentment; and in complying with my earneſt ſolicitations to leave us, he rather indulged the petulance of an overcharged mind, than her tears or my anxieties.

The moment of his departure, ſeemed whilſt it ſhut out one world, to open another to Janetta and myſelf. Each ſingly under the ſcrutinizing eye of a rival, the

the diſtinctions of rank—the luxuries of fortune withdrawn, unattended, unadmired—the veil of fancy ſeem'd to fall, and we ſtood, for the firſt time, the beings God had created us. How ſweet, how conſolatory was that moment, when no ſympathetic bluſh abſorbed the tear which fell for the errors of another.—I like her am weak—am degraded—am friendleſs—am unfortunate,---but I am innocent, again repeated my heart, and the balm of that word healed every wound the preceding ones had made. Habit only, perhaps, had enabled me then to continue ſo; I ſhuddered at the thought, and look'd up in ſilent gratitude to that being who, proportioning our ſtruggles to our ſtrength, rarely permits us at once to riſe to virtue, or to ſink to vice; but graciouſly rendering every important action dependent upon a chain of ſmaller ones, points out to us the neceſſity of that unſhaken attention to all, which alone, perhaps, can ſtrengthen

us to act with rectitude on any. Man, born to gain or lose vigor by every mental contest, unwarily prepares a future weakness, when he yields to a present one, and whilst he defies a giant, sinks beneath an army of pigmies,

The arrival of Mr. Nugent, suspended for awhile the meditations of Lady Melross and myself. He agreed however, with me (tho' contrary to the earnest entreaty of Lord Melross, convey'd thro' him) that my only prudent plan, was to remain at the farm till the hour appointed for Janetta's departure in the morning; when by sending for my own carriage, and driving immediately from her to Winbrook, I might obviate the censure my absence would otherwise incur. With this determination he left me, and heavily past the hours till the morning arrived. Equally fearful of oppressing or exalting Lady Melross, my conduct could hardly either way ensure

ſure even my own approbation; whilſt from hers, I could only gather an impatience to depart, which argued no very favourable idea of me. Proportionably ſtill undepreſs'd, a ſucceſſion of light ideas, of imaginary hopes, of wild and undiſcovered pleaſures, by ſtarts engroſſed her. She already ſeem'd to anticipate the time when ſome accident was to bid her emerge from obſcurity,—to blaze again in diamonds, and to lead the votaries of diſſipation. She more than once reverted to her youth, not ſo much in excuſe for the paſt, as with a ſort of latent expectation for the future, and as a pledge of enjoyments which could only ceaſe with that. —The carriages at length arrived, and we parted—perhaps indeed forever. Oh, Heavens, what different beings each, from the period when firſt we met. To that fair dawn of life, when every object roſe pure and untainted, when the mental eye wandered

over a kind of fairy-land, its own magic enriched and illumined, a long and dreary day of diſappointment had ſucceeded.—Thoſe dark clouds upon which the warm beams of fancy had ſcattered ideal rainbows, had burſt in ſtorms and overwhelmed everything beneath. Amidſt the deluged wrecks of my hopes, my wiſhes and my expectations, virtue alone, like the conſecrated ark, ſeem'd to defy the ſtorm, and to riſe higher upon the tide which had abſorbed every thing beſides.

To Winbrook I drove, or rather, to what was Winbrook; for tho' the flames were extinguiſh'd, the ſmoke, the tumult, and, in ſhort, all the horrors of a conflagration were ſtill viſible. Nor could I learn the leaſt intelligence of Mr. Obrien, who had never appeared there from the moment he parted with me, tho' the fire proved to ariſe from his negligence in leaving a lighted candle on the table where he had

been

been ſealing ſome letters, to which, and other papers, it communicated in leſs than half an hour with a rapidity that fill'd the ſtudy with flames before any diſcovery aroſe. A note the ſervants had vainly kept for their maſter (it being brought a few moments after his departure) was now put into my hands. I knew the ſuperſcription too well, and immediately committed to deſtruction a teſtimonial of that falſe courage which might have doom'd me forever to the moſt exquiſite miſery: I need hardly add, it was a preremptory challenge from Lord Melroſs to Mr. Obrien, dated from Richmond, four hours previous to his reſcuing me.

Mr. Nugent's firſt propoſal on finding me wholly unprotected, was to ſend for you; nor need I recapitulate the motives for my declining an offer every way ſo delicate, ſo conſiderate, and ſo kind. In my ſituation, it was the chance of a mo-

ment which was to raiſe or ſink my character forever; and even that of the moſt reſpectable of her ſex might not prove a ſhelter, when ſhe was view'd as the nominal relation, the undoubted intimate of Lord Melroſs; when with difficulties to encounter in her family, it was known ſhe increaſed them for my ſake: yet a protector, and an immediate one was neceſſary. To venture boldly, is ſometimes to be ſucceſsful.—Lady Almerſtone had profeſs'd herſelf my friend: it was now in her power to be ſo eſſentially. To demand her intervention was at leaſt to anticipate the reports that might reach her, and in ſome meaſure to prove myſelf worthy of it. I parted therefore from Mr. Nugent, whoſe anxiety with regard to Mr. Obrien's abſence, and the probable conduct of Lord Melroſs, now equall'd my own, and order'd the carriage to Lord Almerſtone's.

That

That I was ſucceſsful in my application my date will inform you, tho' weary fingers oblige me for the preſent to pauſe. To thoſe generous hearts which ſo feelingly ſympathize with mine, I have minutely deſcribed all my ſtruggles, and even all my vanity. The events I knew you could be at no loſs to gueſs from Mr. Nugent's generous and kind interpoſition, but it is the trifles of life which conſtitute its charm, and form that cement of affections and ſentiments, whence perhaps, we ultimately derive our happineſs.

A few hours of repoſe, will, I hope, enable me to reſume my taſk, till when I diſpatch this, and am, my deareſt friend.

*Ever yours,*

S. O.

## LETTER CXX.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.*

*Grosvenor Square.*

THE flutter of spirits in which I left Winbrook, slowly subsided as I drew near town, and the impression of past scenes became weaker, in proportion as the future approach'd. Escaped from every thing that could agitate or touch me, I was to solicit the protection of a family where prudence was the first virtue, and sensibility so veiled by the ceremonials of rank, that it was difficult to penetrate to the one, without infringing upon the other. —I was to suppress my feelings; to conceal an agitated heart, under an appearance of tranquillity, and to recount the events which had reduced me to such a singular appeal, with that air of calmness

so

ſo difficult to be aſſumed by the agitated heart of the relater, yet ſo neceſſary to give the relation its due weight with thoſe who hear. The very attempt at conquering my anxieties, diminiſh'd the courage which owed its vigor to them, and I was a thouſand times on the point of returning to Winbrook, and truſting my reputation to the internal conſciouſneſs of integrity. The time however, elapſed in reflection, and I rattled over the ſtones of Piccadilly before I had ſufficiently collected myſelf to know in what manner I ſhould beſt regulate ſo ſtrange an intruſion on Lady Almerſtone. Every idea, and every fear, however, were loſt in one powerful ſenſation of terror, on being ſuddenly overtaken by Sir George Irwin, who gallop'd up at the moment when my carriage ſtopt. Eagerneſs, perturbation, and anxiety, were ſtrongly depicted on his countenance: he alighted inſtantly on catching my eye, and open-

ing the door before the ſervant had time, told me, as he offered his hand, that he had been in purſuit of me above an hour. —What he added, I know not. Senſible that I had left him engaged in eſcorting Lady Melroſs, and without a thought relative to me, unable to account for the abſence of Mr. Obrien, and uncertain what might have been the conduct of Lord Melroſs, or whether accident had not effected the meeting I ſtruggled to prevent, I read every thing horrible in the countenance of Sir George, and ſunk into ſo ſtrong a fit, as required all the efforts of art to recover me. By the kind attention of Lady Almerſtone, (to whom the ceremonies of introduction were thus rendered unneceſſary) that recovery was effected. I ſeemed indeed to "live at once," for the moment ſenſe return'd, it was with that exquiſite keenneſs of recollection terror only inſpires. "You come,

Sir

Sir George," ſaid I, "to prepare me for ſome horrible event; and this weakneſs of conſtitution may well teach you to expect the ſame of mind. Tell me, however, immediately, inſtantly, the very worſt; and aſſure yourſelf, that I can ſuſtain every thing but uncertainty,"

"Sir George comes to prepare you for many events, my dear," ſaid Lady Almerſtone, with an air of concern.

"For *many* events! Ah, Madam, there is but one in the whole univerſe"—I ſtopt; unconquerable emotion ſilenced me; while ſo exceſſive a tremor pervaded my whole frame, as ſeem'd little ſhort of the laſt pang of nature. Lady Almerſtone, and Sir George, look'd at one another with the dubious air of people who know not whether to conceal or avow a ſecret, till they were urged to the latter, by my reiterated intreaties.

"When I left you, Madam, to attend Lady Melroſs," ſaid the Baronet, at length,

"it was (as you indeed know) with the intention of ſeeing her off, and returning immediately to Mount-Herbert, to endeavour at a reconciliation between her and my Lord. We had ſcarce, however, parted, when, by an expreſs from the ſervants who attended her, the latter intention was defeated;—ſhe has eloped"---

"Eloped!" repeated I, breathing again at an intelligence ſo ſhort of my fears, "Lord Melroſs then"——

"The reſt we will defer till you are better," ſaid Lady Almerſtone. "with the aſſurance only, that no other ill conſequence has ariſen from this circumſtance at preſent, than the confirmation of thoſe ſuſpicions, which had long fallen on Mr. Obrien."

"Defer, Madam!" I eagerly exclaimed, "Ah, no, no, I can never be better, till I have heard all. Lord Melroſs then, and Mr. Obrien, have not met."

"They

"They cannot; for with regret I add, that Mr. Obrien is the companion of her flight"——

"To the baſeneſs of a pretended indiſpoſition," ſaid Sir George, by which, ſhe prevail'd on me to let her paſs the night at the farm, ſhe was guilty enough to add an aſſignation; the people of the houſe, accuſtom'd to obey her, willingly convey'd a note to Mr. Obrien. He fulfill'd the appointment it contain'd, and miſs'd Lord Melroſs and you, Madam, only by a few moments." At this part of Sir George's ſpeech, I ſtarted, recollected the very candles which were burning for them on our entrance at the farm, and ſhuddering, adored in ſilence that Providence, which had ſo ſingularly prevented a *rencontre* that muſt have been fatal in its conſequences. "But can it be poſſible, Madam? And is this all?" ſaid I, addreſſing myſelf to each by turns, with a mixture of gratitude and impatience, that almoſt

ſeem'd

ſeem'd to amount to joy.—The ſilence of both again ſtruck terror on my heart, and overwhelmed my frame.

"Whether it will relieve your apprehenſions to tell or conceal the worſt, I am at a loſs to diſcover," ſaid her Ladyſhip, after a pauſe. "Prepare however, for a nearer grief; a more alarming, and even a more diſgraceful event; but let your courage riſe with the occaſion, and, be aſſured of the kindeſt protection, both from my Lord, and myſelf."—Oh, my dear, how dreadful was this preparation! ready by turns, to ſtart out into phrenzical impatience, to waſte my very ſoul in tears, or yield up all its powers, at once into inſenſibility, I remain'd apparently torpid only from my exceſſive anxiety to learn more, whilſt the contrary impulſes, preſſing at once upon my heart, ſwell'd it almoſt into burſting.

"Mr. Obrien," continued Lady Almerſtone, "had a motive for his flight, that effectually

effectually forbids his return. I need not tell you, that he has long ago been ruined as far as a gamester can be so; and the failure of Davenport, by stripping him of that ideal property on which he traffick'd, reduced him to a dangerous alternative. In a word, by a forged acceptance of a note, drawn by himself, he is become amenable to the laws of his country, and knows not whether its justice may not even now pursue him." She stopt;---but I was silent. Shocking, disgraceful, overwhelming, as this intelligence appear'd, it was at that moment so unexpected, so remote from any I had prepared myself for, that the torrent of my ideas seem'd totally suspended, and left me as much astonish'd as touch'd.——She continued,——

"The circumstances that first excited suspicion, occurred at our bankers, and fortunately at a time when my Lord happened to be present. The names of the parties

parties on both ſides, ſtruck him with a ſurpriſe, not unmingled with apprehenſion, and he had the preſence of mind to requeſt a private examination into the affair." Again ſhe pauſed, but perceiving I only wept, proceeded.

"That examination, ſufficiently proved the fraud; and Mr. Obrien not being to be found, (for it was at the time of the fire laſt night, that he was ſought) application was made to Sir William Nugent, (now Lord Killarlo) before the diſgrace of a public enquiry was incurred. His Lordſhip, however, declined interfering"——

"It was like him," interrupted I, with an indignation I could not repreſs.

"And the generoſity of him who ſhould have been the proſecutor," added her Ladyſhip, "alone has reſcued Mr. Obrien from infamy."

"And who, Madam, is this generous friend?"

"That,"

"That," return'd ſhe, half ſmiling, "it is not at preſent of conſequence to know. —The alarm incident to the diſcovery had ſufficiently awaken'd the fears of Mr. Obrien, who has probably ſome chain of connections, by which he gain'd underhand information. I have told you, he was not to be traced. It now plainly appears that he was with Lady Melroſs, at the farm; and her elopement to-day, leaves us no room to doubt but their route is the ſame. The note therefore lies dormant for awhile, that a reſtraining power may be held over Mr. Obrien; it will, however, be paid when our plans for extricating you from him are regulated, nor has he any actual cauſe to fear a proſecution. He has doubtleſs by this time, almoſt reach'd the Continent; caution and prudence may therefore ſilence all ſurmiſe: the derangement of his affairs, will be a very

faſhionable

fashionable and plausible reason for his withdrawing, and your conduct, my dear, with the protection, my Lord and myself will be now happy to extend, will sufficiently stamp you with the respect, he has forfeited."

Her Ladyship paused here, with an air more collected and chearful than she had hitherto assumed. Deceived by the apparent stoicism with which I had sustain'd this shock, she supposed me insensible to, or prepared for it, and waited in silence for my reply. Alas! I had none to offer. —Relieved from the sanguinary visions which had floated before me, I had respired for a moment more freely; it seemed necessary to expel one fear, before my soul had room for a second. But how deep, how insupportable was the impression of that second, when it rush'd upon me. Two years ago, a fortunate and happy being, I look'd round upon the whole universe, and thought it made for me.—

Every

Every voice was then muſic to my ear, and every eye convey'd adulation to my ſoul. The charms of nature, the luxuries of art, by turns, elevated or attracted me: the ſun roſe but to bring me health, and ſet to invigorate it. Now, broken in conſtitution, ruined in fortune, obloquy and contempt ſeem'd my portion; the boundleſs ocean of the world, lay vainly ſtretched out before me, whilſt my aching heart fluttered over its billows, like a tired bird, to whom the whole horizon affords not a reſting place. Even the vices of Mr. O-brien ſunk beneath their attendant miſeries, and the waſte of ruin that overwhelm'd us both, form'd, for the firſt time, an ideal union. I remember'd nothing, thought of nothing but the ſingle incident that thus wound up my fate, and in ceaſing to hear the voices of Lady Almerſtone, and Sir George, I alone recollected they had been ſpeaking. Both, had indeed, by turns addreſt me, and engroſs'd with

with the care of consoling, perceived not that their consolations were unheard. Sir George, at length, took his leave; and when Lady Almerstone inform'd me, that he was the generous friend on whom the fraud had been committed, and by whom the discovery had been suppreſt, every ſofter ſenſation return'd in tears upon my ſoul, and with gratitude, its virtues, and its hopes revived.

It was now, no longer time to diſſemble with friends, who had proved themſelves truly ſuch. I therefore avow'd the whole ſecret of my union with Mr. Obrien, in order to vindicate my character from a choice, that muſt forever diſgrace it; and accepting the protection offer'd me, once more ventured to look forward.

I need not add, that this whole tranſaction will to the world, remain ſtill an inviolable ſecret. Should Mr. Obrien return,

turn, or any channel of communication be open'd between us, I have now power to demand a ſeparate maintenance. For him, reduced to poverty, to meanneſs, to contempt,—a prey to pride, and paſſions he can no longer gratify, my heart ſincerely feels: but oh! it bleeds for the erring and unfortunate woman who has put her fate irretrievably into his hands. Mr. Obrien, it is true, is never brutally cruel, becauſe he is ſo ſanguine and vain, that his diſappointments rarely ſour him beyond the moment. But on that frail barrier reſts all her protection. For as he is nothing from principle, ſo he is every thing from caprice. But why return to uſeleſs diſcuſſions? Can the man who wants a heart, diffuſe any thing but miſery? He needs no borrow'd weapon to wound the boſom of another; every feeling it is enriched with, preſents him a dagger. Sir William Nugent, is I find at laſt, dignified

with

with the title of Right Honorable.——A title indeed! may it prove the incitement to virtue, ſince it is not its reward.

Lord Almerſtone has diſpatch'd his ſteward to Winbrook, in order to preſerve what remains from the wreck. That Lord Melroſs ſhould ſo ſeaſonably interpoſe for my reſcue, was, I found, owing to the alarm which reach'd him on the road from Richmond to Mount-Herbert; various meſſengers having been diſpatch'd for an engine. Ah, how valuable is that life *he* has preſerved.

Write to me I conjure you; I dare not aſk you to come. There was a time, when I was fortunate enough to ſee the friend of my heart, without reſtraint. But almoſt a ſtranger myſelf under this roof, we ſhould both be oppreſt with the formality of a woman who has no other fault.

Tell

Tell me how Lord Melrofs conducts himfelf, what are his fentiments of me,—but above all, what is the matter with his arm. It gave him more pain, I am fure, than he would acknowledge, and I have fince remembered that he faid, the fervant had been driving him.——Adieu, moft beloved friend.

LET-

## LETTER CXXI.

*To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*Richmond.*

A Terrible event has extinguiſh'd every feeling but pity for the unfortunate Janetta. Alas, my dear, ſhe will never live to realize thoſe ſcenes of erring enjoyment ſhe had dared to plan. An early, and unprepared victim to the paſt, the dreadful future will, I hope, be a merciful one. For Obrien, Great God, how vaſt, how heavy will be his account.

Not to keep you in ſuſpenſe, Lord Melroſs yeſterday received a ſtrange, and almoſt unintelligible ſcrawl from the miſtreſs of ſome paltry Inn, on the Kentiſh road, informing him, that a woman who call'd

herſelf

herſelf his wife, (tho' it was plain the writer conſider'd her in a very different light) had ſtopt there with a gentleman in the way to Dover, on finding herſelf ſuddenly taken ill, as it is ſuppoſed from a fright, on being attack'd by two highwaymen.—That left by her companion, ſhe had been delivered prematurely of a dead child, and was not expected long to ſurvive. It concluded with an addreſs to his charity, and a requeſt that the relief might be immediate. Edward ſays, that Lord Melroſs was deeply affected.—How indeed could he be otherwiſe. The very ſtile of the letter coſt me floods of tears. A woman, born in the very lap of luxury, taught to look forward to every view that renders life deſirable, yet in the bloom of youth, and poſſeſſed of perſonal beauty enough to impoveriſh her whole ſex, reduced thus to vulgar ſcorn, or vulgar charity, and *ſelf*-reduced too—I needed not to recollect in her the companion of my earlieſt years, to call

forth all my ſenſibility. I would have gone to her—but that was not deem'd proper. Lord Melroſs, however, made it his urgent requeſt that my mother ſhould. She is accompanied by his Lordſhip's chaplain, Mr. Powell, Mr. Nugent, and every medical aſſiſtance.

Forgive me, if in the agitation of my ſpirits, I do not reply at length to yours: —you muſt ſurely have learnt by this time, that Lord Melroſs received the hurt in his arm in a duel with my brother.—The latter is ſtill at Richmond, and you will ſee by my date that I am with him. —His wound is painful, but not dangerous, being in the fleſh only. That of Lord Melroſs was trifling, or he could not have drove you at all, tho' in order to lead Mr. Nugent into the opinion, that he was diſabled from meeting Obrien, he voluntarily magnified it. I cannot withhold

hold my forgiveneſs, but I confeſs, I think he might have borne much from a brother of mine.——Adieu, my deareſt friend.—Keep up your ſpirits, Powell is to write to my Lord; and I ſympathize too truly in your anxiety, not to ſend you the earlieſt intelligence of Lady Melroſs.—Adieu.

## LETTER CXXII.

*To the Right Hon. Lord Melroſs—From the Rev. Mr. Powell.*

My Lord, *April.*

THE gratitude and reſpect which binds me to an implicit compliance with your Lordſhip's commands, was never put to ſo ſingular and ſevere a teſt as the preſent; and I ought, perhaps, to ſpare your feelings and your delicacy, an account which will I fear, ſhock both. I muſt preface it with the awful intelligence, that Lady Melroſs is no longer an object for any other ſentiment but that pardon, nature and religion equally extend, to thoſe who can offend no more.

The Dowager Lady Somerſet, your Lordſhip's worthy friend Mr. Nugent, the two medical gentlemen, and myſelf, arrived

ed here about twelve, and were introduced to a ſcene, which nothing but the ſtrict injunction laid profeſſionally upon me, could have prevented my drawing a veil over. In the corner of a mean room, even amidſt the mean ones with which theſe houſes abound, damp with the weather, and doubly intolerable by dirt, in a bed, which from its "tape-tyed curtains, never meant to draw," reminded us of that in which the diſtinguiſh'd Duke of Buckingham is ſaid to have expired, lay the ſcarce leſs diſtinguiſh'd Lady Melroſs: apparently lifeleſs, livid, and without one trace of beauty. What, my Lord, is that animating ſomewhat, for the loſs of which, the fineſt features cannot compenſate? Lady Somerſet turn'd inſtantly faint. —Mr. Nugent was much affected, and both for a moment retired, while Dr. S. enquired in a low voice, if the patient was aſleep. The woman of the houſe, to whom miſery was too familiar to be touching,

and whoſe moſt refined ideas ſcarce extended to the keeping within the bare duties of humanity, anſwer'd him only by a repetition of the queſtion in a loud and coarſe voice, at the ſame time drawing aſide the only ſerviceable tatter of the curtain. The Lady half raiſed her eyelids, and under them I ſaw the ball roll faintly round. Inexpreſſibly ſhock'd at an addreſs we had not foreſeen, we inſtantly diſmiſs'd the woman, and, with all the precaution poſſible, I mention'd the perſons who were arrived, and by whoſe deſire they came.—For a moment ſhe ſhrunk into her pillow, and ſeem'd to undergo a convulſive emotion; repeating ſomewhat I did not at firſt underſtand, but which I afterwards found to be an enquiry, whether your Lordſhip was preſent. I aſſured her, you were not; and Mr. Nugent, on his return, added thoſe conſolatory meſſages with which he was entruſted. On my motion-

ing

ing for the performance of the ſacred duties proper to the occaſion, the medical gentlemen withdrew for a few moments, and having written (tho' they confeſs'd with no other view but that of ſtrengthening her for converſation) gave it as their opinion, that the rites might for a ſhort time be delay'd. We retired with the intention of returning in the afternoon, but about four, were alarm'd with the melancholy intelligence, that the lady was in the agonies of death. We hurried to her chamber, where we found her apparently beyond every idea of this world. Yet as her lips moved with imperfect ſounds, (which they had done for ſome hours paſt) Mr. Nugent drew near, and ſaid in a tone ſufficiently loud to be heard by all preſent, "If Madam, at this awful moment, you think you owe any reparation to the character of your Lord, I ſolemnly, in his name, adjure you to make it." Her ear was no longer ſenſible of the difference

of voices; ſhe feebly raiſed her eyes, and ſuppoſed the ſpeaker, to be the firſt whom ſhe ſaw.

"Lady Somerſet, I think," ſaid ſhe: —the former advanced and took her hand. —Lady Melroſs wrung hers.—"Oh Madam, ſhould you ſee my couſin die, think of me.—Her bed will be ſurrounded by friends,—*her* offſpring will bleſs her—and (in a more inward and hollow tone, as if ſtruggling with bodily and mental anguiſh) and their bleſſings will be heard; *mine*"—a ſingle, but emphatic glance, ſpoke all ſhe felt. A pauſe enſued, during which ſhe made repeated efforts to ſpeak, without being articulate, but at length ſucceeded.—

"Powell, give my Lord this, (her ring which ſhe had graſped in her hand) I received it as the pledge of every earthly good, had not the ſenſe of guilt embittered all. That ſenſe now ſurvives every other;—decay ſtrengthens—terror augments

ments it—I only know that I live, by the dread I feel at dying."

"Collect yourself, Madam," said I, perceiving her hand was suffused with a cold dew, and had a convulsed motion,—"the minister of a Being who is all-merciful, is now before you, and will assist your prayers." The exhortation came too late; one agonizing burst of remorse lifted her eyes with an energy, that had somewhat shocking in it towards Heaven, and expelled her soul forever.

Thus, my Lord, died in an hour when she was, perhaps, but little prepared for it, the young and beautiful Lady Melrose; a victim to the world. In her errors many participate; let them tremble lest they should do so in her punishment. I cannot better conclude, than in the inspired language of the Prophet Isaiah.—"How art thou fallen from Heaven, Oh Lucifer, thou son of the morning! Thy pomp is

brought down to the grave, and the noiſe of thy viols.—The worm is ſpread over thee, and worms cover thee."

Mr. Nugent requeſts me to inform your Lordſhip, that he ſhall be detained here a ſhort time longer, but means in two days at furtheſt to relate all other particulars.

*I have the Honour to remain, my Lord,*

*With all due Reſpect,*

*Your, Lordſhip's moſt Obliged,*

*And very humble Servant,*

W. POWELL.

LET-

## LETTER CXXIII.

*To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Lord Melrose.*

Dear NUGENT, *Grosvenor-Square.*

THE singularity of receiving a message from you thro' Powell, without even a line from yourself, or a motive assigned for your silence, could not fail to strike me with surprise and curiosity. It has done more; it has awakened a doubt, of which, I have been strongly tempted to satisfy myself in person. How highly I esteem you, and how much I value the esteem I receive from you, it is now unnecessary to repeat. But there are some points, Mr. Nugent, in which the dearest friend on earth, ought never to interfere. I am neither sanguinary nor vindictive; but if you know any thing of O-

brien, and voluntarily conceal it, that moment is the laſt of our friendſhip. Weigh it well! You are capable of daring much where you think you are right: —but this is a ſubject, on which I can no longer endure either diſcuſſion or advice.

Unfortunate Janetta!—Why—but ſhe made her own fate.

I ſend this by Vaughan. He has my orders to return inſtantly; ſince an affirmative, or a negative is all I require:—and ſhould he be detained three hours beyond the time for poſting it, I ſhall be on the road.——If I have written warmly impute it to the occaſion, and aſſure yourſelf, that I am on every other,

*Unalterably yours,*

MELROSS.

LET-

## LETTER CXXIV.

*To Lord Melrofs, Grofvenor-Square—From Mr. Nugent.*

*Dover, April.*

THAT a *meffage* from me, my Lord, fhould excite your furprife, was not more than I expected; tho' I confefs I was not quite prepared to hear it expreffed in fo preremptory a manner. The acknowledgment, that I dare do much, where I think myfelf right, is however, a fpecies of flattery I ought not to overlook, fince it feems extorted from your judgment, even when difapproved by your heart. I am too vain of fuch an encomium not to aim at proving my title to it, and too confident of your approbation to be alarm'd at your injunctions. Efteem, my Lord, is fortunately one of thofe poffeffions, whofe tenure is within ourfelves;

ourſelves; ſince acquired only by our virtues, it can only be loſt with them. Your doubts, however, as to the motives of my ſtay were juſt. It was indeed Obrien that detain'd me: but I will ſpare your Lordſhip the conſtitutional vice of our ſex, by arreſting the riſing indignation. Heaven has anticipated your vengeance, and whilſt it puniſhed the ſeduced, forgot not the ſeducer. Obrien exiſts no more. Without even the ſame chances for repentance left to the unfortunate victim of his crimes, the ſame hour almoſt brought their puniſhment, and may the ſame humanity conſign both to oblivion.

Powell has doubtleſs inform'd you of the opinion of the phyſicians, that no comfort we might have procured Lady Melroſs would be equivalent to the miſeries attending her removal. As the circumſtances that detain'd us at an obſcure Inn could be no ſecret, we had more than one enquiry

into

into the fate of the unhappy object of our attention. About an hour after that was decided, I was told a Mr. Wyndham requeſted to ſee me.—He was on the road from Dover, (where the ſtory I ſuppoſe was by that time ſufficiently known) and enquired into the particulars of it, with a degree of minuteneſs, my countenance ſpoke me ill-diſpoſed to enter upon. He grew conſcious of an impropriety, and apologized for adding one queſtion more, which was, "whether Obrien was not ſuppoſed to have made for France?"—I readily replied in the affirmative. "He will then never return alive," ſaid he abruptly. "As I landed to-day I ſaw his body brought in to be own'd, ſo disfigured, that the initials on his handkerchief alone awakened my ſuſpicions. The fellows that took him up, ſhew'd me his watch, and other valuables, and I engaged to inform Lord Killarlo of the buſineſs, as ſoon as I arrived

in

in town." For this aſtoniſhing intelligence, I could only return my acknowledgments, and inſtantly endeavour to inveſtigate the truth. Leaving therefore to Powell the charge of writing to your Lordſhip, I track'd the ſteps of Obrien, till I loſt him by a croſs road, into which he had ſtruck, on quitting Lady Melroſs. —The evening of the day after, however, he reach'd Dover; the packet had ſailed; and whether urged by a motive of fear, impatience, or caprice, now never to be aſcertained, tho' probably the former, as an underhand enquiry had already been made after his perſon, (doubtleſs by ſome emiſſary from London) he inſtantly poſted to Deal, and embark'd in a cutter for Boulogne. Heaven, however, had mark'd him.—The veſſel was ſcarce off the coaſt, when a hard gale blew it out of the intended courſe, nor could the ſailors make either coaſt, while the cloſing of the night left them ill mann'd, and ill provided to encounter

counter any danger. The wind continued with a violence, of which there has been no example for many years paſt, and the waves of the enſuing morning waſh'd a corpſe aſhore, that ſufficiently declared the cataſtrophe. The crew lay under water—or at leaſt, were not diſcovered till the Monday ſucceeding; when two bodies were found near Folkſtone. All traces of identity would, however, have been loſt, had not Mr. Obrien's pocket-book, which contain'd letters and notes (both defaced, the ſeals excepted) inſpired a curioſity, many other valuables confirmed. This account I diſpatch'd by expreſs to Lord Killarlo, as his own arms were on one of the letters; and won from his pride, (with Mr. Wyndham's interpoſition) what I fear his humanity would have denied.

The being, however, who liv'd at war with ſociety, the juſtice of Heaven ordain'd ſhould die unregretted by it. A hundred

hundred eyes, probably have paſs'd with vulgar curioſity, over the remains of Mr. Obrien, but not a ſingle tear has yet fallen for him, and the ſuſceptible Lord Killarlo, received the Undertaker and the bill of fare, nearly at the ſame moment.

Mrs. Obrien will have this account from Lady Helen, to whom I have written, and your Lordſhip will learn thro' that channel, the ſituation of her ſpirits, and her health. Heaven has, by a ſingular interpoſition, freed you both. Whether happineſs even when apparently ſelf-dependent, can be permanent, it remains for the future to decide. I think I now ſtand acquitted for that ſecrecy of which you were ſo jealous. Another time, my Lord, you will, perhaps, be more juſt: and aſſure yourſelf, I could not ſo eaſily have ſatisfied my pride, had it not been indemnified, by the opportunity of obliging

you.

you. I dispatch Vaughan immediately, and shall follow him at leisure.

*Yours sincerely,*

EDWARD NUGENT.

LET-

## LETTER CXXV.

*To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*Dear Edward, Grosvenor-Square, May.*

SATISFY the impatience of Lord Melrosſ, and tell him Mrs. Obrien is out of danger. He ſends me a dozen notes in an hour, at every one of which, Lady Almerſtone's face grows longer and graver; nor dare I be guilty of the horrid indecorum of addreſſing this to his Lordſhip, leſt ſhe ſhould think, I encourage an unſeaſonable declaration.——Dr. S. confirms what I have ſaid of our friend:—her ſpirits are wholly overſet, but time and tenderneſs will reſtore them, ſince ſhe is not naturally either vapouriſh, or conſumptive. Adieu—I ſhall be at home by eleven.

*Yours moſt affectionately,*

HELEN NUGENT.

## LETTER CXXVI.

*To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*May.*

I Find myſelf ſo much indiſpoſed to-day, my deareſt Sophia, that I fear I ſhall not be able to call on you.—Do not however be alarm'd, it is only a ſore throat: but write me a few lines, if poſſible, or we ſhall all be undone here. I have already had a great many civil enquiries from Lord Melroſs about my health, which I perfectly underſtand to be a genteel method of turning me out of the houſe.—But, with his Lordſhip's leave, he muſt fret, and I muſt nurſe; for ſo Mr. Nugent and the Doctor have pronounced.

Have you mention'd to Lady Almerſtone your intention of going with us to Mulberry-

Mulberry-Mount? We will ſet out whenever you are perfectly re-eſtabliſhed. For my own part, I cannot now be too ſoon there, and flatter myſelf the journey will be of ſervice to both; ſure I am that the idea of your company, will conduce to the happineſs, if not to the health, of

*Your affectionate,*

H. NUGENT.

LET-

## LETTER CXXVII.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.*

*Grosvenor-Square, June.*

YOUR tender solicitude, my dearest friend, with regard to my health, I am impatient to relieve.—Assure yourself, that your society and your sympathy, have done more for me, than perhaps, the whole faculty could have effected. I am better than you would suppose possible, after so severe an indisposition.—But I must have had a strange constitution indeed, had it sustain'd such successive and horrible attacks, without being shaken.—It had borne much; a little, a very little was wanting; and, tho' freed by melancholy events from an insupportable bondage, taught to look forward to love, to fortune, to all those brilliant chimeras which

which miſled my leſs matured underſtanding, it is not inſtantaneouſly, that the exhauſted heart can reſume its capacity for happineſs. Tears have been ſo long its predominant expreſſion, that even joy ſometimes involuntarily borrows that language;

"The cauſe remov'd, habitual griefs remain;
"And the ſoul ſaddens, with the uſe of pain."

I have conſider'd, and re-conſider'd, in vain, upon the poſſibility of my accompanying you to Mulberry-Mount. Lady Almerſtone ſeems ſo fully to expect my ſtay with the family, nay, has even expreſs'd her deſire of precipitating their journey into the country, on my account, in ſuch friendly terms, that tho' to eſcape it is the warmeſt wiſh of my heart, I have not courage to offer the moſt diſtant hint of the kind. The ſtruggle has made me for ſome days paſt ſo palpably reſtleſs, and

abſent,

absent, that she has doubled her assiduities; and I have been reduced to put a thorough constraint upon myself, lest my *rêverie* should be imputed to a latent, and less pardonable cause.—Adieu:—they will not allow me to be as well as I feel myself, and oblige me to lay down my pen.

S. O.

## LETTER CXXVIII.

*To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*Stanton-Audley, June.*

THE firſt viſitor I received on my return from you, was Lord Melroſs.—He came to aſſure himſelf of your recovery;—to aſk a thouſand queſtions;—to hear every thing;—to hope every thing;—to hear nothing;—to be very melancholy;—very capricious; and, in ſhort, truly the lover.—This, I know, is a language you do not allow. *N'importe*, my dear friend, I could not help myſelf, neither can you. The man is very deeply in for it:—he ſighs, makes long ſpeeches;—talks of eſteem, reſpect, and an old-faſhion'd ſet of feelings, only to be remembered by his great grandmother.—For the moſt charming part of the buſi-

neſs,

neſs, is, that love is baniſh'd his vocabulary, at preſent, till both have "blanched their ſables," and the one may utter, and the other liſten to that formidable word, without glaring impropriety.—The intelligence, that you did not go with us to Mulberry-Mount, was quite unforeſeen!—I hope it has not deprived his Lordſhip totally of the uſe of ſpeech; but he dealt amazingly after, in thoughtful bows,—vacant ſmiles, and all thoſe vague affirmatives, which prove the ſpeaker to be totally ignorant that he is ſuch. To ſay the truth, my dear, I know not whether, for many reaſons, it is not beſt you ſhould remain ſome time longer with Lady Almerſtone. Your health is in a very delicate (I dare not alarm *myſelf*, by ſaying dangerous) ſtate. I ſhall ſoon be confined; you muſt not ſhare that confinement, if you mean to live; and your tenderneſs would but too much incline you to ſhew me every attention. Even when I recover, it

may not be in my power abſolutely to forbid Lord Melroſs from viſiting us, and I have my doubts as to his philoſophy in forbidding himſelf. When you meet, let it be at Mulberry-Mount, *and welcome:* but as to making that the barrier between you, aſſure yourſelf it will never do. You will chide me for not being ſerious. In truth, I do not want ſenſibility,—let me ſay humanity; for in this inſtance, that only is neceſſary.—Thoſe memorable incidents which deprive any human beings of enjoyments they have purchaſed with their innocence, muſt at once impreſs us with pity, and with awe. —But when by the caprices of fortune, we have been connected with her victims, a ſtill tenderer ſentiment is added, and the ſoftened heart views even its own bleſſings for awhile, thro' the medium of tears. But it *does* view them nevertheleſs —thoſe tears brighten inſenſibly into a

thouſand

thouſand Iris hues, and enrich the hopes they ceaſe to oppreſs. Your mourning, was for the life of Mr. Obrien; and whilſt I grant much to example, decorum, and the habits of the ſoul, I cannot forget its dearest wiſhes. You are, I am ſure, ſuperior to a falſe delicacy, when you know it to be ſuch; I think I ſhould not dictate a coarſeneſs; but by reſigning you for awhile to the guidance of Lady Almerſtone, I put it out of my own power to lead you into one.

On Monday we ſet off for Mulberry-Mount; Lord Melroſs talks of going into Scotland; merely I believe with the intention of being diſſuaded from it: for "where a man's treaſure is, there will his heart be alſo;" and his perſon is generally found not far diſtant.——I ſhall take a ſhort leave of you in Groſvenor-Square. For tho' Lady Almerſtone was extremely civil during my frequent viſits there, (I

might call it, my residence) I was not to learn, that I am no favorite with her Ladyship. At that time I was too miserable about you, to attend to any one else; neither, on reflection, can I blame her. The action in my life which most contributed to its happiness, (I mean, my union with Mr. Nugent) certainly exposed me to censures, which nothing but the tenor of that life can confute. If I can live innocently, and die happily, I think I shall prove that I chose well; if otherwise, as Sir Peter Teazle says, "the crime brings its own punishment."

H. N.

LET-

## LETTER CXXIX.

*To Lady Helen Nugent, Mulberry-Monnt,*
*From Mrs. Obrien.*

*Grosvenor-Square, July.*

TO-MORROW, my dearest friend, we set off with all due pomp for Almerstone-Park.—I say due pomp, since if the ceremony of our journey, answers to that of our preparation, we shall grow old before we arrive there. Yet her Ladyship is so thoroughly good with this *étiquette*, so willing to oblige, and make me happy her way, that tho' she teazes me most intolerably at this moment, I cannot be angry with her. Now will you wonder how she can teaze me.—Very easily; tho' (if we may believe the poets) rather in an unusual manner for a woman;—by holding her tongue. For tho' Lord Melross has been with Lord Almer-

ſtone for two hours this morning, tho' her Ladyſhip certainly knows the purport of their converſation, and tho' ſhe cannot but gueſs I have ſome curioſity to be inform'd, yet has ſhe forborne even to indulge my ears with the name. All this, I am ſure ſhe thinks neceſſary, and prudent, or ſhe would not do it; and yet I muſt confeſs, prudence never wore an unpleaſanter aſpect to me, than on this occaſion. As his viſit was to *Lord* Almerſtone, there was nothing ſingular, in his not requeſting to ſee me, ſince none of the ladies were viſible: and thus, behold us ſeparated, perhaps, for life. I could find in my heart to believe I have a preſentiment. And indeed ſo many ſtrange events have occurred to overturn, as well as to favor my views, that I might be romantic, without being abſurd.

I am obliged to break off.—I don't know why I wrote;—I believe it was

to

to tell you my pleaſure on hearing you were arrived at Mulberry-Mount, and to aſſure you, that my health continues to mend. How does my ſweet boy after his journey?—Remember me kindly to him, to Mr. Nugent, to all.—And pity me, condemn'd to courteſy, and be dull, here, whilſt my heart is with you.—Adieu.

## LETTER CXXX.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.*

*A. Park, July.*

ALMERSTONE-PARK, tho' it has not the ſame advantages with Mount-Herbert, either in regard to pictures, architecture, or ornamentals of every ſort, is, in ſome reſpects, rendered ſuperior, by the woods which ſurround it. The former, is indeed, perfect of its kind, and the beautiful ſweep of the Thames, commanding every thing rich and fertile, gives a luxuriance to the view, not eaſily to be paralleled. A river, indeed, we have not here; but the ſweeteſt of all Naiads has taken up her reſidence hard by, and pours her ſtream with ſo exquiſite a clearneſs thro' the wood, as almoſt tempts me to turn poet. I wander there in ſearch of health,

health, "and feel the bleſſed ſun warm at my boſom;" or turning to the breeze, fancy I once more inhale youth, ſtrength, and happineſs.

There is a gentleneſs even in the enjoyments of the country, which ſeems to charm, without engroſſing the mind; and to breathe over it a grateful calmneſs, more approaching to the happineſs of the divinity in proportion as it appears leſs a ſenſation of pleaſure in ourſelves, than a mild and celeſtial inclination of diffuſing it to others. Even the very breezes ſeem fraught with benevolence and purity, as they blow over the landſcape; brightening every beauty, without cruſhing even the humbleſt, and diffuſing to mortal boſoms, a harmony, not unlike that of their native Heaven. Enthuſiaſtic as this deſcription may ſeem, it is not merely viſionary, ſince my happier days have frequently realized it; nor did I then ever ſee the ſetting ſun, with all

thoſe glorious ſcenes which ſucceed his departure of a ſummer evening, without feeling myſelf at once more ſenſible of the bleſſings of this life, and more worthy thoſe of the next. There have indeed ſince occurred, whole weeks, in which I might ſay, with Hamlet, "It goes ſo heavily with my diſpoſition, that this goodly frame the earth, ſeems to me a ſteril promontory. This moſt excellent canopy the air, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majeſtical roof, fretted with golden fires—why, it appears to me, only a foul and peſtilent congregation of vapours." But the mind, however warped, cannot, if naturally good, fail to be reſtored by a creation ſo ſimilar; and I have long ſince been convinc'd, that if integrity is not happineſs, it is the only thing that can ſupply its place.

I have hopes, from Lord Almerſtone's account, that the remains of my ſhatter'd fortune,

fortune, will exceed our expectations. I hardly know the event that could give me equal pleasure. The greater, as it will rescue Mr. Davenport's credit from that severe censure, it would otherwise incur. The world condemns him; and, perhaps, with justice. That world, which, nevertheless, furnish'd him with but too many examples of the fatal extravagance, by which hundreds in it are daily undone. Whether an overgrown metropolis is of advantage, politically, to a state, I am not wise enough to determine; but sure I am, it is fatal to the peace, the fortune, and the innocence, of innumerable individuals, who suppose themselves seeking only those pleasures it affords. To that monstrous idol, call'd *ton*, more wild, more unnatural, more fantastic, than any Siam, or Pegu, can afford, we daily offer up a human sacrifice, not of blood, but of reason. We should blush to bow down to it, did not increasing numbers sanctify the

delusion.

delusion. Thus we voluntarily enlarge the aggregate, by whose authority we are misled, and sink the individual, in that great body, individuals only form. Extravagance becomes a system, and ruin a mere derangement; he who squanders a brilliant inheritance, or debases a noble name, is supposed only to injure himself; society takes no account of those temptations to prey upon it the poor are exposed to, or those more poignant ones to quit it, to which the dishonoured are perpetually liable. The dictatorial *We* of a news-paper-scribbler, announces to the world, the suicide, or the divorce, which supplies the succeeding column with stars, dashes, repartee, or *double entendre;* while the hireling author wraps himself up in all the pomp of obscurity and meanness to decide upon taste, elegance and beauty; the distant reader receives the mandate and sighs to partake the imaginary blaze, while the

the more fashionable circles read, smile, and emulate:—weak enough to be vain of the applause of those they despise, and corrupt enough to be indifferent to the errors their example may extend.

Do not suppose, my dearest friend, that I am acrimoniously censuring pleasures I can no longer partake. I blame only that inverted ambition by which women of fashion are led to emulate courtezans, and noblemen to rival adventurers: to place the consequence in a flaming equipage, the arms upon it sufficiently proclaim, and thus spread that rage of luxury, which endangers the morals, and destroys the happiness of those beneath.—It is certainly true, that I have more cause to feel these errors than hundreds beside; since in some I have been a partaker, and by others a sufferer: nor am I unjust enough to suppose, that either Mr. Obrien, or the unfortunate Lady Melross,

were

were as corrupt in all inſtances, as their conduct in a few has denoted.—Their vices were progreſſive, and the conſequences of their errors.—The taſtes adopted by the one, naturally made the other neceſſary, and the habit of ſelf-indulgence rendered the neceſſity indiſpenſable.—There was never a moment in my life when my pity for both did not attend my cenſure; but that I may not ſeem affectedly to appropriate a falſe, or weak indulgence, I muſt alſo add, that it is not in my power to avoid affixing a heavy condemnation, equally on the living, or the dead, while my reaſon points out the juſtice of it. To arraign thoſe who are no more, is indeed, a privilege, I have ſometimes fear'd to ſupport, tho' I cannot but think it juſt; and for which, even you may probably cenſure me; yet as the weakeſt, the meaneſt, and the moſt corrupt, all live, in different degrees, ideally to the future, ſurely that is a miſtaken

lenity,

lenity, which leaves it open to hope, without the due counterpoiſe of fear. Could guilt be taught to expect the ſame annihilation in the memory, it is prompted by apprehenſion to wiſh for, in a ſtill more important article, another barrier could be thrown down, in addition to thoſe ſophiſtry and faſhion have united to undermine, and this world would be defied, as well as the next.——Adieu, my dear friend.

S. O.

## LETTER CXXXI.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.*

*A. Park, July.*

YOUR fortnight's ſilence could not fail, my dear friend, to alarm, and perplex me, had not Mr. Nugent been ſo kind as to relieve my anxiety.—Aſſure him of my gratitude for the few lines he honour'd me with.* I quarrel with them only becauſe they were few; and far from wiſhing you to write, whilſt you continue indiſpoſed, I enjoin you to the contrary, under pain of my total ſilence; which, with ſorrow I confeſs, is not at preſent a very heavy penalty.

My life, I think has been, hitherto, pretty variouſly engroſs'd. I have been alternately ſad,

*Omitted.

ſad, ſick, anxious: every thing, but dull; and, ſtrange to tell! this is now amidſt the liſt of my grievances. There is a quietneſs, and uniformity, in the ſtyle of living here, which would be ſufficiently agreeable to me, could I be allow'd to indulge my own reflections; but that is out of the queſtion; for I am never alone: and the fatigue of maintaining a vague, and unintereſting converſation, becomes often inſupportable. Lady Almerſtone is no reader, except of faſhionable books, which unfortunately are not always the beſt calculated for my ideas of entertainment. When ſhe *has* read, ſhe has no opinion, till ſhe ſees the next review. —And when that has furniſhed her with one, ſhe never defends it. Company, we have none, except gentlemen, of which we every day at dinner ſee three or four; moſt of them officers, from the regiment quartered at D. I may literally, however, term it *ſeeing* them; for to offer a

ſingle

ſingle word, beyond a mere monoſyllable, to any one, would fix her Ladyſhip root-bound in her chair. Their viſits are ſolely conſidered as an interchange of civilities between themſelves, and Lord Almerſtone. They underſtand the *etiquette* of the reſt of the family, and that every thing beyond a profound deference, and ſilent reſpect, would be eſteem'd an intruſion. Our dinner, therefore, conſiſts of two entire diſtinct parties. Lady Almerſtone heads her table, with that eaſe and high-breeding ſhe ſhews on every occaſion. I fill the right hand; Lady Euphemia, (her waiſt very ſmall, her hair powdered very brown, and her little chin doubled in, as if the ornaments on her head were burthenſome) graces the left: the younger ladies do not make their appearance till tea. His Lordſhip and the accidental gueſts, alone interrupt the profound ſilence during our repaſt, and our

exit

exit is made, as ſoon, as in decency, it can; after which we meet no more.—To this rule there is only one exception, in a Major Burrell; who, (from what pretenſions, I know not) is a ſort of favorite with both Lord, and Lady, Almerſtone. —He is a young man; they call him handſome; I ſhould not have eſteem'd him ſo: but he is tall, florid, ſhewy, with that ſort of plauſible underſtanding, which makes its way frequently beyond the more ſolid. To me he has particularly addreſt himſelf, on many occaſions, in the moſt inſidious manner.—I mean, by an inferred reſpect for my opinion, and judgment, more flattering than the moſt extravagant admiration of my perſon. Lady Almerſtone, who ſometimes breaks thro' her reſerves ſo far as to converſe with him, is not diſpleaſed with the attention he ſhews me, as ſhe looks upon the Major to be a man of diſtinguiſh'd underſtanding; tho' did ſhe entertain an idea, that his politeneſs amount-

ed

ed to gallantry, I queſtion whether he would be admitted again to the honor of her notice. Let him keep his own ſecret, however, and I ſhall not betray it.— We muſt love, or hate thoſe, whom we think of conſequence enough to be noticed on ſuch occaſions; and my heart is too remote from all who ſurround me here, to lay me under the neceſſity of aſking it the queſtion. Strange that the very tranquillity we court, ſhould not be empower'd to make us happy.

Hélas! où donc chercher, où trouver le bonheur?—
En tout lieu, en tout tems, dans toute la Nature,
Nulle part tout entier, partout avec meſure,
Et partout paſſager, hors dans ſon ſeul Auteur.
Il eſt ſemblable au feu, dont la douce chaleur
Dans chaque autre élément en ſecret s'inſinuë,
Deſcend dans les rochers, s'élève dans la nuë,
Va rougir le corail dans le ſable des Mers,
Et vit dans les glaçons qu'ont durci les hivers.

My

My boaſted tranquillity has, however, been diſturbed by a trifling circumſtance. —The charm is diſſolved, and Lady Almerſtone has ſpoken. Spoken, of Lord Melroſs, my dear. I was not all *ear*, that is a weak term, but rather all ſoul; and what is worſe, all ſcarlet, from ſurprize, and perturbation. She began, by aſking me if I thought there would be any impropriety in her admitting a viſitor, to whom I was the chief attraction. With an eagerneſs, I ſhould afterwards moſt wofully have regretted, I was going to anſwer in the affirmative; when, probably recollecting ſhe had aſk'd me an aukward queſtion, ſhe added, with a ſmile, that ſhe was not quite clear whether ſhe ought to refer it to my deciſion: ſince the viſit, tho' meant *at*, was not directed to me. "In ſhort," continued her Ladyſhip, "my ſon, and Lady Maria, will ſoon be here. We have long promiſed to go down with them into Devonſhire, and the chief deſign of

their

their journey, is to requeſt your company. That part of the Colonel's letter, which relates to Lord Melroſs, you will ſee." She put it into my hand; but it might have heen Hebrew: for the powerful effect of a name I had not now heard for ſome months, ſeem'd to have converted me into an idiot, which I clearly proved by turning the letter twice round, before I knew which way to begin it. It did not contain, however, above half a dozen lines, familiar, and lively enough; mentioning that Lord Melroſs was to ſhoot with him the enſuing month, in Devonſhire, and had engaged to be of their party to A. Park.—The date of the Colonel's letter, was Mount-Herbert.——And as, in the concluſion he ſaid ſomething of Lady Maria, and her *ceciſbeo*, I very fairly ſuppos'd his Lordſhip had contriv'd to make his party good with one branch of the family, to inſure a ſmiling reception from the other

other. She then mention'd the converſation he held with Lord Almerſtone, the day before we left town; which, as I truly gueſſed, related ſolely to me; and contained every thing I could have expected, from his generoſity, or his affection. His *generoſity*—Oh, my dear, why do we ſigh at being indebted to thoſe we moſt eſteem: yet there are moments when I look back with regret, on the fortune, the youth, nay, even the perſonal advantages I have loſt; and grieve that I can bring Lord Melroſs, no graces, but thoſe his love beſtows on me—idle chagrins!—We ſhould never prove, how vain we can be at ſome moments, but by the fits of humility that ſeize us at others. I knew not I thought myſelf handſome, till I found out the wonderful ſecret, that I was no longer ſo; and if I do not lay down my pen, I have my doubts whether my opinions may not undergo another reverſe, perhaps much more abſurd than the former.

* * * * * * * * * *

I have juſt made a diſcovery relative to my lover, the Major, which will I believe put a period to our gallantries. It is rather unlucky, to be ſure, but the good man is married: he forgot it I ſuppoſe; and probably would not have been ſorry the lethean draught had been convey'd to all his acquaintance. By having ſtrain'd his leg, he was prevented from making one of our party at dinner; and conſequently became the chief topic of converſation there. —The gentlemen, were, however, unanimous in their encomiums. "Burrell, was the life of the corps; an honeſt fellow; a worthy fellow; one of the moſt open-hearted fellows upon earth"——

"Pray Sir," ſays an old officer at my elbow, "where is his wife?"

"His wife!" return'd one of his warmeſt panegyriſts,—"Oh aye!—his wife!—why faith, I don't know; I believe ſhe's ſomewhere:

ſomewhere :—I ſaw her, about a month ago! poor devil, in a miſerable condition at York. We forwarded a ſubſcription to ſend her over to her friends, but I think ſhe was fool enough to talk of following him."

"Pray," ſaid Lord Almerſtone, with ſome ſurpriſe, "is he married then?"

"Oh yes, my Lord! he married about a year and a half ago, a woman with a pretty jointure, which *he* contrives to ſpend; for I believe ſhe has ſeen but little of it ſince."

"Has he any family?"

"He had a good fine boy: but I fancy Burrell does not trouble himſelf much, either about the ſon or the mother."—— Lord Almerſtone changed the converſation: his Lady dropt her eyes, as ſhe does when ſhe is diſpleaſed; and I ſecretly form'd my determinations, as to the worthy, honeſt, pleaſant Major Burrell.

On Monday next our party is expected from Mount-Herbert; Oh, how many heart-flutterings have I to undergo before that period arrives. I have ſubmitted implicitly to Lady Almerſtone's judgment, in regard to the decorum of my meeting with Lord Melroſs. As he goes with the Colonel into Devonſhire, his ſtay here, ſhe ſays, will be ſhort; (ſhort indeed, ſince we are now in Auguſt) and, if it is thought improper, that his Lordſhip ſhould be of the ſame party with me, ſhe will either remain at the Park, and make it a mere excurſion for the gentlemen, or conſent to my viſiting you. I did not tell her my opinion that this ſhooting ſcheme was a pretence, and never intended to be executed; which, however, I cannot help ſuppoſing: ſince Lord Melroſs would ſurely either not come at all, or endeavour to prolong his ſtay, (if only in compliment) beyond the limits of a day, or two. On theſe occaſions fortune generally decides ſo much

better

better for us, than we can for ourſelves, that I have made it almoſt a rule, never to interfere, till the laſt moment;—and if ſhooting is ſo very pleaſant an amuſement, as voluntarily to engage him, —why, pray let him ſhoot.—Oh, how lightly do we talk, when the heart is at eaſe. One moment's ſerious doubt, would compleatly check this ready pen, which the ſweet ſenſation of happineſs, now leaves not under the neceſſity of ſeeking a ſentiment.

Adieu, my dear friend!—When your health is reſtored, let me hear from you; and be aſſured, that valued health, is ever an object for the prayers of,

*Your affectionate,*

S. O.

## LETTER CXXXII.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.*

*A. Park, August.*

AND so you have really made me the dupe of a kind artifice, and brought us a little girl, whilst I supposed you only thinking of it. Mr Nugent's second letter* was indeed a surprise upon me; and the intelligence of your danger, at the very moment, probably, when I received his first, made me tremble even on reflection. He assures me you are now beyond all apprehension: and it is on occasions like this, we feel the value of a sincerity in which we can confide; since, even where my heart is most feelingly alive to doubt, and anxiety, it can so firmly repose on his. May Heaven, my

*Omitted.

my dearest friend, extend your blessings, with your ties; and return upon your own bosom, all that happiness, you so well know how to diffuse!——A little incident has occurr'd, since my last, which has shock'd, interested, and agitated me; and as this will not reach you, till well enough to support the relation, I may venture to make it.

When I told you, I had form'd my determinations as to Major Burrell, I was not aware that Lady Almerstone had done the same: her sense of morality was infinitely too strong, to permit her to shew any encouragement, towards a man who deserved it so little, and from not seeing him at table, I presently understood, he was no longer a welcome guest there. The morning being remarkably cool, and beautiful, we yesterday set out for D. in order to return a visit, or two, Lord Almerstone wish'd his lady to no-

tice. We were walking ſlowly along the Park, the carriages following, when a flaming beau on horſeback, advanced on the gallop towards us, whom, on a nearer view, we diſcovered to be the Major; he recognized us, and inſtantly diſmounting, gave the reins to his ſervant, with an air, gay and graceful enough, whilſt he join'd us. Lady Almerſtone look'd grave; I was ſilent; but an unfortunate fit of loquacity had ſeized upon the gentleman, and he was not to be daunted. He walked on with us; talk'd much; and laugh'd more. About a quarter of a mile from the town, whilſt we waited for the carriages to draw up, a woman croſs'd the road, from a ſhady lane, which is uſed as a foot-path. Her dreſs was the ſhabby genteel; almoſt, indeed, below that; a flounced petticoat, with a chintz pattern gown; a hat, with a hundred ſtreamers flying, and a cloak cover'd with powder.

She

She turn'd her head from a motive of curiosity, to view the party, as she past.—But what became of me, when I saw, (tho' haggard, and alter'd) the features of Mrs. Davenport. I did not faint; but a half scream involuntarily escap'd me, as I seiz'd the arm of the Major, who seem'd, indeed, little less disconcerted than myself.—The unfortunate object of my attention, instantly knew me, and, without a second look, walked on abruptly; whilst Lady Almerstone, seeing my eye still eagerly pursue her, ask'd the Major, "if he knew that woman."

"That woman," Madam, return'd the mortified beau, with a profound bow.—"The woman there, Madam,—is—is—is my wife.—At your Ladyship's service."—One single glance, at the conclusion of this curious speech, compleatly annihilated the Major; who look'd, indeed, as if he could with joy have stepp'd up behind that carriage, into which he was vainly

offering to put us. I was by this time ſo far recovered, as to enter it; and while driving back to the Park, I recounted to her Ladyſhip, the cauſe of my emotion: ſhe was touch'd with it, as well as myſelf; and we agreed, that Lord Almerſtone ſhould order ſome examination to be made into the ſtate of the Major's affairs.

A long, long train of ſad reflections, had now, however, taken poſſeſſion of my mind; which Lady Almerſtone perceiving, enter'd more fully upon an enquiry into the paſt, than ſhe had hitherto done. —She queſtion'd me in a very pointed manner, as to Mr. Obrien's opinion of Lord Melroſs; (to whom, by the bye, ſhe is extremely partial.)—And whether he ever entertained any jealouſy of him. I aſſured her, I believ'd not; and that at the only period of my life when he could have cauſe for a ſurmiſe, (that is, during his

Lordſhip's

Lordſhip's viſit to Winbrook) he had never expreſs'd any :—ſhe aſk'd me why he diſliked him. The anſwer was obvious.—Mr. Obrien, early ſunk his fortune, and his talents, in the world; whilſt Lord Melroſs gain'd upon it in both. Could Mr. Obrien have made the latter his dupe, it is poſſible he would never have hated him, or, could he have made him the partaker in his vices, he would, probably, never have injured him. But failing in either attempt, he look'd up to his merits with jealouſy, and to his rank with envy. He had diſcernment enough to perceive, that I was, by a combination of chances, an object for the ſame ſentiments to Lady Somerſet, and that nothing was wanting to what they would have deem'd the triumph of Lord Melroſs, and myſelf, but a connection, which, however criminal, was but too probable. To awaken me to all the horrors of ſuch a ſituation, before I had

tafted its guilty enjoyments, was, undoubtedly their chief motive for alarming my fears, as to the cenfures of the world; to that world, Mr. Obrien knew Mifs Sutherland was devoted; nor could there be a more fuccefsful method of winning her, than by forwarding her views in it. They were probably acquainted with each other's fentiments, long before any other connection took place; or rather, that connection, arofe from an intimacy fo dangerous. For they never loved.——Love! that fweet, and powerful enchantment, which lends a charm even to the faults of its object, and when, unwillingly, we fee them, ftill makes us flatter ourfelves, they are not noticed by the world, was unknown to either. It was the phantom of the day they fought: I have heard them laugh alternately at each other, at the moments when they muft have been moft intimately connected: and fly from the fweets of a private circle,

cle, in which they might have mingled unobſerved, to diſſipation, to glare, to the croud, which abſorbs every ſentiment but vanity, and every talent, but that of dangerous deriſion. The reflections I was making to Lady Almerſtone were much of this nature, when I was interrupted by a note. I knew the hand, and ſicken'd at the ſight; it ran as follows.

"A. Burrell's (late Davenport's) moſt affectionate reſpects to Mrs. Obrien;—would have taken the liberty of waiting upon her, had ſhe ſooner known, that Mrs. Obrien had been at Almerſtone-Park, but was very much ſurpriſed, at meeting her on the road to-day.

A Burrell has been very ill, ſince ſhe laſt ſaw Mrs. Obrien, but hopes to be able when next they meet, to ſay ſomething, in vindication of her conduct, on a particular

ticular occaſion; and will come down to A. Park, any evening Mrs. Obrien may appoint."

Water's-Street, Friday night.

If I had been ſhock'd at ſight of the note itſelf, how much more was I, at the ſtyle: it ſhattered every nerve. To fall in ſpirit, as in fortunes, is the diſtinction of little minds. Without a ſtandard within themſelves, they ſink, or riſe upon the billows of the world, and know no medium between pride, and meanneſs. Whilſt the reflecting, and the upright heart, fixes its own eſtimate, is unfortunate, without being degraded; and imparts an innate dignity, even to thoſe reverſes, which deprive it of every external one.

I wrote a long, and, in ſome reſpects, impaſſion'd anſwer, to this billet. To ſee her was impoſſible. Had the wound I received from her, been inflicted by the

the hand of a ſtranger, I think I could more eaſily have forgotten it; but "it was my companion, my guide, mine own familiar friend," who oppreſt my youth with ſorrow, and embittered my maturer years with regret. I would have done much to ſerve her, for ſhe was unfortunate, but to ſee her was, I felt, impoſſible.

After a variety of emotions, ſo unforeſeen, and ſo trying, you will imagine I am ill-prepared to ſee Lord Melroſs.—Yet this day, this very hour, perhaps, we are to meet. Oh Heavens! can it be poſſible! my trembling fingers prove I think it ſo, and oblige me to break off.

* * * * * * * * *

Will there be no end of theſe tumults? A ſervant is juſt arrived, to ſay, the party will not be here till evening. I am grown

grown ſtupid; I could not ſee he had a livery on.

"Here comes a gentleman," ſaid I, to Lady Euphemia, as we were looking thro' the window.

"Of a new creation," ſaid ſhe ſmiling, "if we may judge by his cape, and his cuffs."

* * * * * * * * *

The fears, the anxieties, the flutters of my heart, are at length ſubſided.—Its flutters, did I ſay! Oh, no; they are but begun. Misjudging world, which gives no paſſion the name of romance, but that which is moſt ennobling, and moſt conducive to happineſs; envy, ambition, and revenge, find their advocates, and are allow'd to be at leaſt, the failings of noble ſouls: whilſt love, that divine gift of the Creator, which unites each to each, and all to him, is treated as the delirium

of

of youth; a mad dream, from which we are to derive only reſtleſſneſs, and regret. —But do we ever live ſo truly to the world at large, as when we imagine we exiſt but for one being in it? It is then, we deſire to become truly eſtimable. It is then, diveſted of thoſe light vanities which debaſe the emulation that excited them, we would, riſe the objects of univerſal approbation; proud, to ſacrifice in ſecret that little tribute to him for whom alone we deſired it. Love, has made many victims, it is true; but could we ſee the hearts it has humbled, and purified, the virtues (even tho' ideal) it has taught thoſe hearts to emulate, we ſhould often eſteem it one of the firſt principles of good amidſt mankind.

The moment the carriages drew up to the gate, I turn'd ſo faint, I thought I ſhould have expoſed myſelf. Fortunately it was the cloſe of the evening, and the greetings

greetings between Lady Almerſtone, and her own family, ſufficiently engroſs'd them. —But what do you think that ſtrange man, Lord Melroſs did! March'd up with the moſt perfect ſolemnity, after the Colonel, and ſaluted her Ladyſhip, who was not at all aware of the compliment; whilſt I look'd ſo extremely ſilly, as ſhewed I appropriated it.

Pleaſure, that great touchſtone, to which every heart vibrates, for awhile made us all one character. I was no longer ſilent; Lord Almerſtone no longer a ſtoic; his Lady no longer ſtiff; and this formidable meeting, loſt every thing but its happineſs. We have retired late, but I am deceived, if any of us are thinking of reſt, our hoſt excepted. Lady Almerſtone, is cloſeted with her darling daughter; Lady Euphemia, talking to her French governeſs; Lord Melroſs and the Colonel, ſtill in the

the ſupper-room, and I, one moment liſtening, and another ſcribbling; catching the diſtant ſounds of that voice my ear has ſo long miſſed; and quarrelling with my heart, whenever it is deceived by the more vociferous and leſs pleaſant tone of his companion. I am miſtaken, however, if this good Colonel is not perfectly in his Lordſhip's confidence as to me; or rather, his Lordſhip is in ſo very good a humour, that he has no ſecrets it can be any compliment to confide.

To be diffuſe, was ever the foible of my heart, and, at the approach of happineſs I feel it return. Heavens, how ſweetly, when warmed by that powerful ſenſation, does it expand with its own feelings, and give ideal conſequence to all the trifles of the moment. Let me pauſe over this exquiſite period of my life:—Ah, perhaps it has none more exquiſite to offer. This period, when ripening

hopes

hopes ſwelled almoſt into certainty, become every inſtant adorned with new tints. I have thought myſelf nearly into tears, and therefore had better break off. —Tears, however, far different from thoſe painful, thoſe agonizing drops I have ſo often ſhed. Love, invigorating power, thou who canſt alone revive the heart, withered by worldly cares, and mental ſtruggles, thro' every tye do I look up to thee with gratitude; whether tremulating from the ſoft liſpings of infancy, the tender cautions of age, or the more dangerous and tumultuous accents breathed from leſs matured feelings,—ſtill, in a well governed mind, art thou the ſource of good—humbling its vanities, correcting its ſelfiſhneſs, bidding it taſte the bleſſing of beſtowing happineſs, and, finally, the ſweet reward of receiving it.

Adieu, moſt beloved friend.—My warmeſt, my tendereſt anxieties ever attend you and yours.

LET-

## LETTER CXXXIII.

*To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.*

*Mulberry-Mount, August.*

THANKS, my dearest Sophia, for your kind wishes: from minds like yours, they come with the force of benedictions; and that they are in part fulfilled, my being allowed to acknowledge them under my own hand, will sufficiently prove.—To participate in all your enjoyments is so much a happiness, that I am afraid it will not pass for a merit, and yet it is the greatest I can claim.

When I was scarcely sufficiently recovered to see any company, we were surprised with a visit from my brother and Lady Somerset: it was a start of kindness however, on his part, and therefore gave me

me great pleaſure; the more ſo, as he is really far from well, and requires a more attentive, and affectionate companion, than her Ladyſhip; who having been ſome months paſt, rather in a declining ſtate, is whimſical beyond all deſcription. Spenſer has a nervous fever, cauſed, I fear, by drinking, that has made him too very low and vapouriſh, and having been ordered to change the air frequently, he would not, he ſaid, paſs thro' this county without viſiting *Mr. Nugent*, and me.——Here was a revolution, my dear! but the unhinged frame, will call upon the ſocial affections; and teach us in ſickneſs all the value of thoſe ties, on which, proſperous health, looks down with contempt.—They found Edward and myſelf enjoying the ſweets of the woodbine, juſt as the moon was riſing, like the ſpirit of coolneſs, from behind the brow of the adjoining hill, after a moſt ſcorching day. Her Ladyſhip

took

took the earlieſt opportunity of hinting at the vulgariſm we were guilty of; and, producing her eſſence bottle, aſſured us how unequal ſhe was to ſupporting ſuch ſtrong odours. Entertain'd us with a long ſtory of a man that *cainter'd* backwards and forwards, whom ſhe choſe to take for a highwayman, and was, in ſhort, more frivolous and affected than ever.

Mr. Nugent and my brother were ſo captivated with a beautiful ſpot in their ride, the next day, that they inſiſted on ſhewing it us. The airing was long, nevertheleſs I ventured it; and was fully repaid. It is one of the ſweeteſt vales I ever beheld. A lovely river winds thro' it, the banks of which, are fringed with a happy inequality; on one ſide is a beautiful hanging wood, where clumps of old trees darken the view, and contraſt the autumnal ſhades of purple, green, or brown, ſeen in the younger plants.—A

few groups of cattle, and cottages, with a neat and well-built houſe, almoſt emboſom'd, the front of which was covered with vine, and jeſſamine, compleated the view: I was peopling this retreat in my imagination, and contriving what apology I ſhould make, when on entering abruptly, we ſhould find a young lady ſeated at a harpſichord, whilſt an old one of a *very ſtriking demeanor*, turn'd over a globe at ſome diſtance, when lo! on examination, the manſion proved to be uninhabited; and I had the mortification of ſeeing a ſpot, which ſeemed the region of romance, utterly thrown away. How inſipid do fortune and title appear at ſome moments: the divine tranquillity of the proſpect, the purity of the air, and the murmuring of the river, which was the only ſound, except the occaſional bleatings of ſheep, made me half wiſh I could ſee you and Lord Melroſs turn'd ruſtics there, with a race of lively brunettes, glowing, "celeſtial

roſy

rosy red," thro' the tan of exercise; whilst Edward, and myself, would take up our abode in some neighbouring cottage, and set fine cloaths, and fine liveriès at defiance.

As people are always in extremes, my good brother is suddenly seized with an inclination to patronize the man he oppreſt. He has been talking to Mr. Nugent about an electioneering buſineſs, in which he could ſerve him; but the latter is ſo inflexibly honeſt, that I am ſure it will never do. The member propoſed, has indeed very little influence; but what is to be hoped in favor of one, who ſhould tell them, (as Edward, probably might) that he cannot afford to buy, becauſe he does not intend to ſell; and that in proportion as they think they honour him in conferring the duty, he ſhall believe he obliges them in undertaking it. We live in Old En-

gland, not in Old Rome, my good friend, ſo take my word for it, this is a doctrine, the ſturdy votaries of beef and pudding will not be made to underſtand.

Your rencontre with Mrs. Davenport, (I have forgotten her other name) was one of thoſe events, which tho' the mind cannot be ſaid to be prepared for, ought hardly to ſurpriſe it. The weak, the vain, and the vicious, are ever more particularly the dupes of that blind goddeſs they follow. Miſled by the reigning folly of the moment, they deviate imperceptibly from the common track, and riſe, or fall, they know not how. She is puniſhed, however; and to pity her is the extent of my charity.

When it is your pleaſure to deſcend from your forms, with Lord Melroſs, and liſten to his voice in a ſtill pleaſanter

tone,

tone, it will be a moſt welcome piece of intelligence to both Edward and myſelf. —I am ſo malicious, that I will not tell you what his Lordſhip ſays on the occaſion; tho' he has written us a long letter. —However, it is not *very much* to your diſadvantage.——Mr. Nugent obliges me to conclude.

H. N.

## LETTER CXXXIV.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.*

*A. Park, August.*

THE diſtance between Lord Melroſs, and myſelf, which you are ſo ſolicitous to remove, it has not been long in my power to preſerve, whatever might have been my inclination. I begin to believe, he was not born to be denied; —Alas, I once thought otherwiſe; however, his Lordſhip was ſo determined to make the experiment, that, in order to avoid being diſtreſt by attentions he was at no pains to conceal, I became almoſt as ſolicitous of an explanation as himſelf. —Having made a party to dine in the woods to-day, we ſet out early, and returned late, the weather being particularly favourable:—could I believe my ſenſes! placed under the protection of Lord Melroſs,

rofs,—my arm in his—it was (for the firft time) permitted me to liften to him;—and never was the choice of my heart, fo flattered by my reafon. The light, the gay, the frothy part of his difpofition, thofe captivating levities which charm us in the intercourfe of the world, fubfiding for awhile,—left him truly himfelf. His character, at once more fimple, and more elevated, rofe upon me fuch as nature had form'd it; warm, penetrating, manly; demanding my efteem; exciting my refpect; capable of infpiring the permanent attachment mind alone creates, and of feeling all it infpired. Surely I never loved till then; or rather, my love never received that powerful fanction, which ftrikes from the underftanding upon the heart, and ennobles the fentiment it confirms.

Amidft a variety of other fubjects, Lord Melrofs touch'd upon his family affairs; his mother's fate—Ah that unfortunate mother; who, robbed of all her rights—excluded

alike from the affluence and rank ſhe was entitled to demand—from the ſtill more valuable bleſſings of conjugal and maternal affection,—ſunk, an early victim to accumulated injuries. He ſhewed me her picture; it was ſo beautiful a likeneſs of himſelf, that I was tempted to accuſe him of vanity in producing it;—the form of the face—the very ſmile ſo natural to him when he ſpeaks;—of all that wonderful reſemblance we have ſo often diſcovered in him to his father, none but in the eyes remained. He ought to be handſome, ſince I believe he had the handſomeſt parents France or England could afford.—I had not courage to enquire into the particulars of his mother's character, or ſituation, and judged from his ſilence, it was a ſubject too tender for explanation; we therefore inſenſibly fell upon that of his litigation with Mr. Erſkine, which he treated with a degree of philoſophy, the warmth of his temper, and the pride that has ever been ſuppoſed one of its mark-

ing

ing *traits*, gave us little reaſon to expect: but it is the diſtinction of ſuperior minds, ſilently to extirpate in their progreſs thro' life, thoſe conſtitutional imperfections, which time only engrafts more deeply in weak ones. Lord Melroſs, will perhaps, always be a proud man; but he will diſtinguiſh the pride of merit, from that of ſituation, with which, perhaps, it has been hitherto but too much blended; for they muſt boaſt an uncommon degree of perfection, who can early diſtinguiſh ſentiments ſo ſimilar, and often ſo perplext with each other, that the deluſion of ſelf-love, is hardly neceſſary to make us confound them. Ardent, impaſſioned, ambitious, his outſet in life was marked by too impetuous a love of its diſtinctions; a love, which breaking thro' the ties of ſubordination, nature, and reaſon, taught him to treat a father with contumely, and confound remonſtrance with diſreſpect: nor tho' poſſeſſing nobler diſtinctions within, than thoſe external ones he aſpired to,

was he ſenſible of their value.—The error, tho' innocent, has ſeverely corrected itſelf. Evils, incurred by worldly advantages, mental ones only have alleviated; experience has convinced him, that to be elevated in rank, is to carry a torch thro' an obſcure night, whoſe ſplendor oftener dazzles the bearer, than thoſe around, and is leſs a protection from villainy, than a guide to it. Withdrawing from the diſtinctions of birth, or the brilliance of wit, his heart has alternately reſted on Mr. Nugent, or Sir George Irwin; in the one, he has ſeen the ſuperior influence of underſtanding, awe rank into inſignificance; in the other, the irreſiſtible charm of goodneſs, has bade even talents claim but the ſecond place. By learning thus to eſtimate the hearts of others, his own becomes corrected. The weak and erring pride, which once only taught him to ſeek the world, refining into a nobler principle, now ſets him above it; and even thoſe diſtinctions which

he

he then regarded as ſubſtitutes for deſert, are inſenſibly become only its incitements. To that romance of youth, which is always warm, never diſcriminating, and as often flaming into a vice, as a virtue, a calm and rational ſyſtem of conduct has ſucceeded: if I have been fortunate enough to aſſiſt in lending ſtability to ſuch a character, ſurely the more captivating of my ſex, ought ſtudiouſly to watch thoſe principles in their own boſoms, which are to arreſt the wavering ones in the boſoms of others. Man, tho' born with the vigorous and marking virtues which diſtinguiſh his career thro' life, frequently ſuffers the humbler ones that muſt conſtitute its happineſs, to be cruſhed by education, and cuſtom. Theſe, it is the part of woman to preſerve; and while from his example ſhe acquires candor, ſtability, and fortitude, ſhe muſt inculcate by her own, the no leſs uſeful qualifications, of gentleneſs, and ſelf-denial.—You will ſay

I preach—I am afraid I do. Severe experience is a ſort of early old-age, and is apt to make us garrulous. My heart takes a dubious pleaſure in dwelling at intervals upon the paſt,—in trembling over thoſe ſcenes when ſad reflection involuntarily made me wiſe, and expanding to that future, which is to make me happy.

Lord Melroſs did not conceal from me, that he had no intention of going into Devonſhire, but that not being able, otherwiſe, to accompliſh our meeting, or break thro' the reſerves of Lady Almerſtone, he had adopted ſuch a pretence, in order to effect both. I made every engagement conſiſtent with that decorum, which the world, (if for the ſake of example merely) has a right to demand; and not being able to puniſh myſelf ſo far as voluntarily to ſhun his ſociety, frankly aſſured him that I would endeavour to remain in London, (where he engaged to be) on

our

our quitting the Park. When I made this agreement, I was not aware that Lady Maria, and the Colonel, were ſo deep in his plots, as I found them: ſince, in two hours more, they had compleatly diſſuaded Lady Almerſtone from the Devonſhire journey, and by engaging her to go to Twickenham in a fortnight, fixed us all near enough to Mount-Herbert, to ſecure a meeting whenever we pleaſe.

But who, think you, is to be of our party?—A name-ſake of mine, of whom you made mention when in Scotland;—Miſs Vernon. The grandfather, on whom ſhe depended, is lately dead, having left her an ample fortune: and as ſhe is on an intimate footing with Lady Maria, they mean to ſpend ſome time together, both in the country and in town. Do not aſk me my opinion of your favorite; I muſt know her a little better before I can form one.—I am inclined to think, a ſtronger

magnet

magnet than friendſhip brought her here, and that being now informed of the ſecret engagements of Lord Melroſs, ſhe feels diſappointed and hurt. We are therefore, at preſent, each bent on developing the character of the other; and to own the truth, his Lordſhip's good ſpirits have made him ſuch excellent company, that he has engroſſed the whole party. Oh, happineſs, happineſs, how ſweet, how benign would be thy influence, did it not as often give birth to the weed, as to the roſe; and too frequently wither the one, while the coarſer, and more ſtubborn nature of the other, flouriſhes, and ſpreads beneath the beam. May it ſhine diſtinguiſhingly, laſtingly upon my friend, is the ſincere prayer of her ever affectionate,

S. Obrien.

End of the Fourth Volume.